

## Conversation Analysis Mini-Analysis Paper

This mini-analysis paper requires you to analyze discourse using a conversational approach, specifically Conversation Analysis (CA). You should have had a bit of in-class practice using this method, and some in-class and written practice with similar conversational methods such as pragmatics. The goal of this paper is to apply the CA method to excerpts of your transcript to make a claim about what the discourse is accomplishing in that conversation. In doing this you should

- develop discourse analysis skills and appreciate how small details of talk can shape social meanings;
- learn to analyze discourse in a particular way that focuses on how the sequence of actions in conversations accomplishes social phenomena;
- prepare for the final paper.

This guide will outline the requirements, instructions, and grading for the mini-analysis paper. Specifics of the content, organization, and format of the paper will be described. Further explanations can be solicited during lecture, in office hours, or by email to [roblesj@uw.edu](mailto:roblesj@uw.edu).

### Requirements

<b>Due date</b>	<i>Monday, February 3, 11:59pm</i>
	The Canvas deadline is bit stricter than I am, and will mark your submission “late” even if it’s submitted just a few seconds after 11:59pm; however, I am able to see the exact time of submission, and being a few minutes after this deadline is not a problem. Later papers will lose points. Papers will not be accepted after 9am February 4 <sup>th</sup> except in extreme circumstances.
<b>Page length</b>	<i>2 full pages</i>
	Page length does not include transcript excerpts, reference list, or any extra spaces. Make sure your format is correct to get the most accurate sense of your page length. “2 full pages” means 2 pages—not a page and a half, for example. Try not to go too far past 2 pages. Your instructors may not have time to finish reading your paper if it is too long, and this may affect your grade.
<b>Content</b>	<i>Conversation analysis of transcript excerpts</i>
	You should apply course concepts from lecture and readings to excerpts of your transcript of your recording, using the conversation analysis method, to make a claim about something going on in your data. Details about content are elaborated in the content section under “Instructions” below.
<b>Organization</b>	<i>Introduction with thesis, body, conclusion</i>
	Your paper should have a brief (half page or less) introduction in which you state your thesis; a body in which you describe your data and the method you’re applying to it, and apply course and lecture concepts to 1-2 short excerpts from your transcript; and no more than a few sentences summarizing and concluding the paper. Details about organization are elaborated in the organization section under “Instructions” below.
<b>Format</b>	<i>Simple APA format and college-level writing</i>
	Your paper must look a certain way. Your transcript will retain its original format from the revised and formatted version of your transcript assignment. Details about format and writing are elaborated in the format section under “Instructions” below.

### Instructions

*Before you begin* your paper, make sure you have not been absent for any lecture or Friday section classes. If you have, check with a classmate to make sure you didn’t miss any important material or announcements or clarifications about this assignment. Also make sure you

have not omitted any readings so far and that you have good notes for your readings. Check the “reading notes” discussion thread on Canvas to see if there’s anything you’ve missed from readings. If you had troubles with practice analyses, either in class or during previous homework, make an appointment with your instructor to resolve any confusion.

*As you start analyzing your data* (the transcript and recording it is based on), be sure to keep in mind the tools we have learned so far in the Gee (2011) text. You should think through all of them, however, there are a few which are particularly important to the CA method:

- **Making strange:** CA is all about proving how small communicative techniques work without assuming it is “obvious.” This tool encourages you to take a step back and not make claims that are based on something you have no evidence for, even if technically true. The goal is to rely on empirical data and learn something new by seeing the interaction as an outsider.
- **Doing and not just saying:** As with all of the methods we’ll look at in class, CA assumes that any particular utterance is not just saying something, but is also trying to accomplish some sort of action. In other words, everything has a social reason to be said, even if that reason is just “I’m still here hanging out with you.” This tool asks you to think about what people are trying to accomplish when they say what might otherwise appear to be very mundane or random or pointless things.
- **Why this way and not that way:** An important aspect of CA is looking at how choices in discourse affect meaning. A classic CA question is, “why that, now?” In other words, *why was that particular thing said in that particular way, at that particular point in time*, among all the possible things that could have been said? This tool reminds you to consider all the possible ways people COULD have said and responded to things so you can start to get a sense of how choosing one way versus another has consequences for the conversation.

*As you develop a claim*, ensure that you are drawing on the focus of this class—paying attention to the what, how, and when of discourse, seeing communication as action, and analyzing language-in-use. Also always be consistent with the method you are using. You may discover interesting elements in your data, and some may be things you can save for later papers, but you cannot use them if they veer off into another method (such as cultural or critical approaches). Also make sure any points you want to make about your data can relate to one overarching claim. You will not be able to say every possible thing that can be said!

*When writing down your ideas* you should use the vocabulary and point of view associated with the method as well as other relevant theories and vocabulary which relate to the points you make in the paper. Terms you actually discuss, apply, and use to describe your data might include particular theoretical ideas such as speech acts or face, terms particular to your method such as turn-taking and adjacency pairs, and terms which describe specific aspects of your data such as identity, narrative, person-reference, stance, jargon, dialect, conversational style, genre, and so forth. Any point you make, and any concepts you refer to, should be consistent with the method you are using. Back up any point you make by referring to specific details in your transcript, using the line numbers (and quoting when appropriate).

*When writing your paper*, don’t forget to check the requirements about how to organize it and how to format it. If you have any struggles with writing you should have at least one skilled friend look your paper over; you might also consider seeing the writing lab at the library.

## **Content**

There is not one specific thing this paper has to be “about”—you might discuss identity, relationships, group belonging, exiting conversations, emotion displays, accents and dialects, word choice, stories, arguments, humor, taboo topics, revising statements—as long as the paper grounds any point you are making about one of these social/discursive

phenomena in details from your transcript, without drawing on background information that isn't able to be linked to the transcript. Specifically,

**Your central claim** should be something about how specific examples from the discourse in your transcript *do* something: show how people accomplish certain actions in their talk. This can relate to an action accomplished across a conversation (such as all the little acts that go into “breaking up with someone”) or can relate to actions in much smaller series of utterances. The important thing is that your claim sees language as active and can be related to the sequence of the conversation as well as what and how things are said/communicated.

**Your analysis** of the transcribed excerpts should use details from the transcript, always referring to line numbers and at times quoting from the transcript. When making points about anything you assert is happening in the transcript, you should use vocabulary which is associated with CA, and may also use concepts associated with conversational approaches in general (especially speech acts!) as well as theories and concepts that are related to or describe whatever you're focusing on in your paper. To be doing a “CA” analysis you should consult and cite the CA chapter in the Cameron (2001) text, Schegloff (2007), websites such as the one you looked at in a Friday class (and any others you find helpful), and lecture/lecture notes as well as any non-required reading you do on your own time.

## Organization

The paper needs to be organized in a particular way so that the structure of the paper is clear and easy to follow. This paper will be organized in a simplified version of how discourse analysis papers are organized in professional academic research which will also help you know where and how to discuss aspects of the content. This is outlined below.

### **Introduction** (half page or less)

1. You should have a short introduction that introduces the reader to the main topic or focus of the paper. Try as much as possible to have a specific, engaging first sentence(s): just like in person, first impressions make a difference in papers, too! Don't be super vague (like “Communication is all around us”) or super boring (“This is a paper applying conversation analysis to a transcript”) or talking more about the class than your ideas (“In this class I learned that...”) or jumping in too quickly without context (“My recording was of two friends...”). Your introduction should thereafter include what method you are applying (conversation analysis) and what data you are applying it to (transcript of a recording), but you do not need to describe these in detail—just a quick mention so that it's clear right away what materials the paper will use to make its claim. Speaking of claim...
2. Your introduction should have a thesis in or at the end of it. A thesis is a statement about what an essay is going to do. You want to preview what the point of your analysis is going to be. At the very least your thesis should describe some of the points you are going to make in your paper. However, a better thesis will state a claim that you will support with your data. So the former would be something like “This paper will analyze turn-taking and repair” while the latter would be something like “This paper will show how some repairs are a way of inviting the other speaker to take a turn and complete the first speaker's utterance.”

### **Body** (rest of paper)

1. Right after your introduction you should have few sentences (quarter of a page or less) that describe the method you are using (conversation analysis) and the data you are applying it to (transcript excerpts from a recording) in a bit more detail. You do

not need to say everything, but just enough for the reader to have a basic understanding of what the method is and how it works, and what the data are—what you recorded, and what you transcribed from it. This does not need to be in a separate paragraph.

2. The rest of the body of your paper, and the majority of the length of your paper, should analyze your data using course concepts to make a claim. Specifically throughout your analysis,
  - a. Use 1-2 small excerpts from your transcript (at least 3 turns of talk, but no longer than half a page single-spaced—keeping in mind this does not count toward your page length) to make a claim about something going on in that data. You'll only have a little over a page to do the analysis so you'll have to really focus and make just ONE claim about ONE thing in the interaction. The idea is to go as in-depth as possible about some very specific points. Always refer to the line numbers when mentioning something from your transcript. Your claims should focus on the 1-2 excerpts from your transcript, but you can back up points using selected quotations from other parts of your recording, or untranscribed details from your recording, if appropriate.
  - b. Use course concepts as you make your points about the data. You should be using central CA terms (such as turn, turn-taking, adjacency pairs, repair, preference, etc.) when appropriate. You should use other terms as they relate to your points (such as speech act, face, narrative, discourse marker, etc.). You should NOT be trying to apply as many terms as possible. Always keep in mind the focus on language-in-use and use terms which fall under that viewpoint, for instance, "utterance" or "speech act" or "discursive practice" rather than "sentence." Include in-text citations for concepts you use. Format for these is described in the format section below. You do not need to define every single term you use as long as it is clear how you are using the terms and clear how the concepts are demonstrated in the examples from your transcript. You might want to briefly describe any key terms you are using, like a central theoretical concept that's at the heart of your paper. Do not use any direct quotations from readings.

**Conclusion** (a few sentences or less)

1. Your conclusion should be the last few sentences of the paper (it does not necessarily have to be its own paragraph). It should wrap up your paper in some way (don't just stop abruptly!) and remind the reader of what your claim was (that you stated in your thesis and should have been reinforcing throughout your analysis) and how you showed it.

**References list** (2+ references)

1. You should at least cite the Cameron (2001) reading. Other appropriate sources you might cite include Schegloff (2007), Gee (2011), lecture, websites, non-required readings on our website, and sources you find on your own. Format for these is described in the format section below.

**Format (and Writing)**

The paper must be written to college-level standards, with few or no errors in grammar, punctuation, syntax, spelling, and so forth. Your style should be formal and academic—do not use slang or too many contractions (can't versus cannot), and try to write as much as possible as if you are a researcher engaging in inquiry, using your curiosity about conversation to guide you, rather than a student writing an assignment. It is fine to use the occasional "I" in this paper (especially to avoid passive constructions: "I will argue that" is better than "it will be shown that"), but make sure the paper is more about your claims and analysis than you personally (so "this paper demonstrates that" or "this analysis will

investigate how” is even better). If you or people you know are in your data, pretend for now that that is not the case—refer to yourself, too, in the third person, as if you were someone else, and don’t forget to use pseudonyms unless the data participants are famous or public figures.

The paper also needs to look a certain way on the page. This “look” is a simplified version of APA format, which is the basic format for all (non-rhetoric) communication research articles. This is listed below.

#### General Paper Format

1. The paper should have a title (centered, bold) with your name (centered, not bold) under it. You do not need to add other things like the course name or number, the date, and so on.
2. All text should be in Times New Roman 12 point font, double spaced, EXCEPT for the transcript excerpts. You should have no extra spaces between paragraphs and your text should be left-justified with indentations at the beginning of each paragraph. Your margins should be 1-inch ALL the way around the page.
3. Transcript excerpts should be in Courier/Courier New, 10 point font, single-spaced. In addition to what you did for the transcript assignment, your excerpts should have all the transcript notations you should have added during your transcript revisions, and all the formatting you should have added during your transcript formatting, which you should have worked on during a couple Friday classes. This includes line numbers! Refer to the transcription guide for a complete description and example of what your excerpts should look like within your paper. The excerpts must be pasted into the body of your paper at the points at which you discuss them.
4. On the next page after the conclusion you should have the title “References” for your reference list. This should be centered and bold.

#### In-Text Citations

In-text citations should be enclosed within parentheses and should appear at the end of the appropriate sentence or paragraph, within the period. You should not have any direction quotations, nor should you refer to the author by name within the text of the paper. This means you must be careful to paraphrase fully and not accidentally plagiarize. The APA format for citing sources is the author’s last name, followed by the year of publication. If there are two authors their names should be separated by an ampersand. If there are more than two authors they would be listed with commas as well. A few examples:

**Lecture:** A speech act is the social action accomplished in discourse (Robles, 2014).

**Cameron text:** A speech act suggests that whenever we say something, we are also doing something (Cameron, 2001).

**Tracy & Robles text:** A speech act is the social meaning of an utterance (Tracy & Robles, 2013).

**Website:** The idea behind a speech act is that talking makes social life happen (Antaki, 2011).

#### References

The list of references at the end of your paper should only be those which you have cited within the paper. You need at least two sources listed, at least one of which must be Cameron (2001). You will list these in a simple/partial APA format (though feel free to do the full APA if you know it), alphabetically by the authors’ last names. Note that your transcript is NOT a source, it’s data—so you do not “cite” it nor list it

as a reference. A few examples (yours would be double-spaced; the first example is website, the second and fourth are books, and the third is lecture):

Antaki, C. (2011). An introduction to conversation analysis:

<http://homepages.lboro.ac.uk/~ssca1/sitemenu.htm>

Cameron, D. (2001). *Working with spoken discourse*.

Robles, J. S. (Winter 2014). Conversation analysis.

Tracy, K. & Robles, J. S. (2013). *Everyday talk: Building and reflecting identities*.

## Grading

All mini-analysis papers will follow the same rubric, which is very similar to the final paper rubric in terms of the criteria it's looking at. The rubric is on Canvas and will have points assigned for each category as well as specific comments for each criterion (when appropriate) and possibly other general comments. Here is a brief description of each criterion and how it will be assessed. Please visit your instructor during office hours if you have questions about grading. Each of these criteria corresponds to the elements just described in this guide.

**Organization:** “this paper is organized as directed, with the proper content in the proper section”: **5 points**

The organization component of your paper is worth 5 points of your grade. As long as you have few to no organization errors as required in the organization section (described earlier in this guide) you will get a full 5 points. However, if you are missing a major component or have recurrent errors, you will lose points, up to -5.

**Format/writing:** “this paper is written to college-standards with few to no errors, and is formatted (in terms of appearance, citing, referencing, transcript excerpts, etc.) according to most or all of the specifications in the assignment guide”: **5 points**

The format/writing aspect of your paper is also worth 5 points of your grade. As long as you have college-level writing with few to no errors, and have followed all the writing specifications as outlined in the format section earlier in this guide, you will get the full 5 points. However, if you have a major format or writing problem, or recurrent errors, you will lose points, up to -5.

**Content:** “this paper includes all the content required including a thesis and coherent analysis, accurate use of course concepts, convincing points made which are backed up with specifics from the transcript and explained, everything consistent with a discourse analytic approach and with the specific method employed”: **15 points**

The content portion of your paper is the most important part, and is therefore worth the greatest number of points in your grade. If you have included all of the content elements specified in this guide, including having a thesis and using course concepts to apply a discourse analysis method to your transcript excerpts, you will get 15 points. However you will lose points if you are missing elements of content, for example, if you have not explained how your transcript evidence backs up the point you are making, or if you apply a concept incorrectly, up to -15.

**Extra Quality:** “paper is especially well-written, makes interesting points, has an argumentative claim which is well-supported and evidenced, demonstrates sophisticated analytic skills, and/or uses concepts accurately and non-superficially”: **5 points**

The quality of your paper refers to the extent to which your writing and content goes above the basic requirements of this guide. This does not apply to the format or organization of the paper, but only to writing and content. These points are added to your paper if you have high-quality content and writing. For example, if

your paper is engaging to read and well-argued, you may have points added, up to 5 points.

Note that unlike the other criteria, where points are subtracted if you have *not* fully accomplished the requirement, the quality criterion *adds* points if you have done more than basically accomplish the requirement. This is because although I expect all papers to be pretty good and to follow instructions, I do not expect everyone to do as excellently as the top people in the class. Some people will have a knack for this sort of paper or will learn a bit faster. To give them the same grade as someone who does not do as well would be as unfair as giving two people the same grade even though one person turned in something incoherent or heaven forbid plagiarized.

The goal of these mini-analysis papers is to offer you an honest assessment of your analytic skills so far in a consequential way. It is assumed that you have had enough practice beforehand with papers for which you received points just for attempting the analysis that you have had a chance to start learning your strengths and weaknesses and correcting them. It is also assumed that you will take seriously your performance on the mini-analyses and work hard to get a higher grade on the final by asking questions in class, paying attention to feedback, and meeting with your instructor to go over anything with which you need more assistance or guidance.

Though this guide has done its best to describe expectations in an explicit way, it is not possible to spell out every single specific aspect or option in a way that every one of the 90+ people in class will fully grasp. As with any lecture given in class, most people should find this guide sufficient, while some will find it more than was necessary and some will find it is not enough. You need to be self-directed about what *you* find clear and unclear about assignments, especially higher-stakes ones like the mini-analyses and the final, and be sure to ask questions in class, by email, and during office hours until you feel confident you know what is expected and how you can achieve your aims in the class.