

Mark Dingemans

"The comparative study of language in interaction: towards a typology of conversational structures"

ABSTRACT

Conversation is the primary ecology of language: the main context for language learning, socialisation, and change. Long thought to be either too messy to study linguistically or too culturally variable, recent years have shown promising developments in the cross-linguistic study of conversational structure. Many documentation projects now collect at least some conversational data, and for larger languages there are often multiple corpora of social interaction available. Yet data is nothing without solid methods and relevant research questions. This course provides students with theories and methods to make sense of conversational structure and to study it cross-linguistically. It combines insights from linguistic typology and conversation analysis and reviews some of the key findings in the emerging field of pragmatic typology, the comparative study of systems of language use and the principles that shape them. Starting from basic structural features of social interaction (including turn-taking, sequence organisation and repair), the course provides students with the conceptual foundations, analytical tools and practical methods for the systematic comparative study of conversational structure.

Key readings

Dingemans, Mark, and N. J. Enfield. 2015. "Other-Initiated Repair across Languages: Towards a Typology of Conversational Structures." *Open Linguistics* 1: 98–118. doi:10.2478/opli-2014-0007.

Schegloff, Emanuel A. 2006. "Interaction: The Infrastructure for Social Institutions, the Natural Ecological Niche for Language, and the Arena in Which Culture Is Enacted." In *Roots of Human Sociality: Culture, Cognition, and Human Interaction*, edited by Nick J. Enfield and Stephen C. Levinson, 70–96. Oxford: Berg.

Sidnell, Jack. 2007. "Comparative Studies in Conversation Analysis." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 36 (1): 229–44. doi:10.1146/annurev.anthro.36.081406.094313.