Reflections and readings of Conversation Analysis from APLNG 586

1. Edwards, A. & Westgate, D. (1994) *Investigating classroom talk***.** Routledge

p. 101, defines a "frame" as routine actions of understanding shared and enforced within which to interpret what's happening.  I think this is a key to understanding classroom discourse and discourse analysis.  Although it's difficult, a researcher must enter this frame in order to truly understand discourse.  I wonder though, is it ever possible for an "outsider" to enter this frame?  Even if the researcher begins observation at the beginning of the class, since they are not a part of the classroom interaction, can they ever fully enter the frame and how will they know whether they have entered it or not?

I think classroom discourse analysis is important for teachers to learn, especially in the area of formulations.  On p. 123, it is pointed out that formulations are likely to be shared around and contested or rejected as inaccurate in normal conversation, whereas in classroom conversation, there is often a single "authorized" source of definitive statements which students concede to.  So, a REAL open classroom discussion would be defined by the extent to which the teacher's formulation of facts/ideas are questioned.  Teachers need to realize this to avoid being too authoritative and allow their ideas to be challenged.

**2.** ten Have, P. (2007)**.** *Doing Conversation Analysis: A Practical Guide***.** Sage Publications

1. Chapters 1-2

CA broadly means the study of people talking together--"oral communication" or "language use."  However, in a restricted sense, CA points to particularly Sparks' tradition of analytical work (p. 5).  It's important to realize that CA is a bigger field that just what is covered in this book.

It seems important to distinguish "pure CA" from "applied CA."  What we learn from Mr. ten Have is that "pure CA" examines institutions *of* interaction; it is meant to gloss analyses that focus on procedures of talk-in-interaction from any specific institutional context.  Whereas "applied CA" studies management of social institutions *in* interaction.  It focuses on practices typical of setting-specific and institutional-specific and is framed in wider concerns than just talk-in-interaction. (p. 8 & 12)

Four important parts of CA distinguish it from other methods of analysis: CA uses very detailed transcripts and other data, and is thus "closer to the phenomena," CA uses naturally occurring data and is thus less artificial, CA believes that interaction is organizational and procedural as they attempt to explicate *how* talk is used, not why, and CA uses oral language rather than written language. (p. 10)

2. Chapters 3-4

It is important to point out that all kinds of social research--qualitative, quantitative, and comparative--involve efforts to construct "representation of social life" in a scientific way and dialogue between ideas & evidence (p. 27 & 29).

Here are 2 very important keys to understanding how CA research: 1.) Verbal accounts from participants regarding their own conduct are rejected because participants may not know what they have been doing or why afterwards, and tend to justify their behavior (p.31).  2.) The prime function of CA transcriptions is to note sequential phenomena in much more detail than necessary (p.32).

3. Chapter 5

The definition of a research design is basic, but a key word and therefore a key point to know.  A research design is a plan for collecting and analyzing evidence that will make it possible for the investigator to answer the question posed. (p. 68)

Sampling is another important word to define and a key word when talking about transcripts.  Sampling is the process of selecting a representative set of cases from a much larger set. (p. 70)

I find it important to remember ten Have's 3 points when trying to get consent for recording and using data, because as he pointed out, it can be difficult!  We should remember to guaranty anonymity and minimal disturbances of work process, and make it clear that we are willing to face any other party resistance. (p.87)

4. Chapter 6

Keeping a metronomic beat, such as "one one thousand," can be used to count pauses, instead of a stopwatch.  In this instance, each syllable of the beat is two tenths of a second.  I'm relieve that this method is possible because I was worried that pause counting should be extremely exact.  Ten Have made a good point that it is difficult to "catch" the exact beginning and ending of a pause, so I think there is room for error and estimation. (p. 102)

I think it's worth pointing out the difference between inter-turn pauses and intra-turn pauses and that there is some analysis in a transcript (p.107).  Inter-turn pauses usually have their own line in a transcription as this pause signals that someone else can take the floor and the speaker's turn is complete.  An inter-turn pause is a break in the speaker's speech, but speech is not complete and the speaker is not signaling that another may take the floor, these are transcribed on the same line as the speaker's talk rather than having their own line.  I think some transcriber intuition is used here and relates to the "normative element" problem brought up in the previous point.

5. Chapter 7

The real job of CA is to find patterns and explicate their logic.  According to Psathas, one should be "open" to discovering phenomena, rather than searching for instances of already identified and described phenomena.  This is called "unmotivated looking" (p. 120).  To me, this sound like the definition of CA, but it's important to keep in mind that although one should be "open," it would be silly to ignore 40 years of conversational data; ten Have suggests that we use this data to "structure one's looking" (p. 121).

I felt that one of the most important parts of this chapter is ten Have's proposed analytic strategy (p. 125):

1. Take a selected part of a transcript (selected through unmotivated looking and intuition), then look for 4 types of organization: turn-taking, sequence, repair, & turn-design.

2. Then try to formulate general observations, statements, or rules which summarize what is happening.

Talk-in-interaction is mostly "other-directed," either inviting the other to respond, or responding itself (p. 133).

6. Chapter 8

Two important definitions: A deviant case analysis is where a routine breaks down (p. 145).  Analytic elaboration is finding more instances throughout the data of whatever action or practice one noticed in a selection of talk (p. 146).

The purpose of CA is to get a theoretical grasp of interactions underlying "rules" and "principles" by formulating rules and testing them (p. 150).

ten Have expands his proposed analytic strategy from Chapter 7 (p.164-165):

1. Start with a corpus of data which has not been pre-selected with any particular notion.  Ideally, this should be a complete, start-to-finish recording.

2. Make a detailed transcription of the data.

**3**. Take a selected part of a transcript (selected through unmotivated looking and intuition), then look for 4 types of organization: turn-taking, sequence, repair, & turn-design.

**4**. Then try to formulate general observations, statements, or rules which summarize what is happening.

5. Select another piece of data, look for the 4 types of organization, revise the summary if necessary, and repeat until done with corpus.

6. Rework summary in terms of generality of data coverage.  Construct a formulation.