Conversational Practices with a Purpose:
Interaction within the Standardized Survey Interview

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Conversational practices with a purpose

- Research interviews use an everyday interactional resource – our tacit knowledge of how to talk to another and how to understand what the other says – to conduct measurement for scientific purposes
  - Bingham and Moore (1924) characterized the research interview as a "conversation with a purpose"
  - Converse and Schuman (1974) described DAS interviews as "conversations at random"
- Participants display an ongoing tension and alternation between the practices of everyday talk and those of scientific practice

Overview

- Paradigmatic question-answer sequence
- Standardized response to answers
- Interaction through the lens of standardization
  - Interaction coding of the answer sequence
- Utterances as actions
  - Conversational practices within the answer sequence
  - Varieties of reports

The paradigmatic question-answer sequence

- Question
- Answer
- Acknowledgement

Paradigmatic sequence: Example

Case 10, Q38

FR:no

()

FI: and how would you describe your ability to
   remember things during the past four weeks

   were you able to remember most things somewhat
   forgetful very forgetful or unable to remember
   anything at all

()

FR: most things

()

FI: okay

FI: how would you describe your ability to think and
   solve day to day problems

Paradigmatic sequence +

Case 15, Q38

FI:Oka:y? (0.1) .h Wood yuh duhscribe ye:r- (0.1) ho:w
   wood yuh duhscribe yer ability tuh reme:m↑ber thi:ngs
   durin' tha pa:ss four wee:ks? .hh Wuh you able tuh
   remember mo:st thi:ngs, somewhat fergetfu:l very
   fergetfu:l er u:nable tuh [remember a:nthin' at a:ll.]
MR: [Yeh mo:st thi:ngs I pritty]
   much r'member °evrythin' pritty we:ll.° hh (0.4)
FI: Ho:w wood yuh [duh-]
MR: [This] is tha university uh Mi:chigan
   ri:ght? (0.2)
FI: HHH u(h)h he(h)h he(h)h he(h)h [°he(h)h° °°hi(h)h°°]
MR: [A(h)h ha(h)h   ]
   ha(h)h ha(h)h okay I'm so:rry go head.

Some techniques of standardization: Responding to answers (adapted from Fowler and Mangione 1990)

- Probe inadequate answers nondirectively
    - Closed questions: explain that choosing an answer from the list is the way to answer, repeat entire list of categories
    - Numerical answers: Repeat question, "zero in" with a series of probes that do not suggest an answer (e.g., Would that be two or more or fewer than two times? THEN: Would that be 0, 1, or 2 times)
    - Open questions: Repeat question, How do you mean that, Tell me more about that, Anything else?
    - Don't know answers: Diagnose source, repeat question if needed, reassure that there are no right or wrong answers if needed

Responding to answers -- continued

- Record answers without discretion
  - Open factual questions: Write down all information relevant to the question's objectives
  - Open opinion questions: Write down the answer verbatim, using no summaries or paraphrases
  - Closed factual questions: Check off the answer chosen by the respondent, if respondent is uncertain, proceed as with open questions
  - Closed opinion questions: Check off the answer chosen by the respondent, probe until the respondent chooses an answer, check off a category only if the respondent chooses it
- Be interpersonally nonjudgmental about the substance of answers
  - Do not volunteer personal information or views
  - Use neutral feedback

Coding the answer (Cannell, Fowler, and Marquis 1968)

- Acceptable answers
- Inadequate answers
- Elaborated answers

Coding the answer (Sykes and Collins 1997)

- Answers adequately
- Thinks aloud before answering
- Changes answer
- Answer possibly invalid
- Explains response
- Extraneous but non-digressing response
- Answer inadequate for coding (indicates misunderstanding)
- Answer inadequate for coding (other)

Coding the answer (Dykema, Lepkowski, and Blixt 1997)

- *[Codable]*
- *Uncertain:* Expresses uncertainty about question, requests clarification
- *Qualified:* Qualifies answer
- *Uncodable*: Response does not meet question objectives, uncodeable

Coding the answer (Schaeffer and Dykema 2004)

- *Codable answer:* Response answers question/ verification/probe and can be coded into response categories/format.
- *Implicitly codable answer:* Response answers question/verification/probe but does not match response categories/format.
- *Uncodable Answer:* Response either does not answer question/verification/probe OR it cannot be coded into response categories/format
- *Qualification:* Includes a qualifier such as "probably" or "about."
- *Seeks Clarification*: Requests repeat of the question or clarification of a term.
- *Elaboration:* Provides information in addition to a codable answer

Coding the answer: Comments

- Coding systems developed for different purposes
- Published definitions may be incomplete or ambiguous
- Concepts that appear to be similar may have different labels and operational definitions, without explanation

A modification: Considering utterances as actions

- Using orientation of conversation analysis we can see talk as utterances and utterances as actions

- What are interviewers and respondents doing?

- Can describe actions taking place within the actors' orientation to constraints of standardization and demands of the task

Data

- Interaction and cognition in surveys of older adults (Schaeffer and Maynard)
- Wisconsin Longitudinal Study (WLS)
- Digital recordings of interviews with members of panel of 10,000 members of Wisconsin high school class of 1957
- Telephone interviews in 2004 and 2005
- Sample of 50 interviewers from one replicate
- Selected one case from each interviewer
- Conversation analysis for developing coding system for health and metacognition questions and cognitive assessments (letter fluency and digit ordering)

Some specifications of the "answer" event

- Complete formatted answer
- Refers to category by description
- Repeats intensifier
- Repeats response dimension
- Repeats or paraphrases part of question
- Repeats or paraphrases part of response options
- Uncodable yes or no
- Distancing

- **Adds a point on the response scale**
- **Consideration, elaboration, or condition**
- **Uncertainty or likelihood**
- **Approximation**
- **Range**
- **Quantification**
- **Hypothetical**
- **Other report**
- **Don't know**
- **Refusal**

Reports in CPS (Schaeffer and Maynard 2002)

```
FI:     Do you have your own business or farm?
MR:     Weahh Well I'm(.) in partnership with my sister in
        the shoe repair business? (1.5)
FI:     Okay so that would (.) uh qualify as your own
        business?
MR:     I guess so



FI:     Did you do any work at all including work for pay or
        other types of compensation…
FR:     I'm on maternity lea maternity leave right now
FI:     Okay so nother words you are w-last week you
        actually did not work [right]?
FR:     [No did] not work…
```

Reports

- Characteristics of reports
  - Provided as an answer
  - Does not use format projected by the question
  - Provides information that may project an answer or a difficulty in answering
  - Leaves upshot to interviewer
- Interviewer's response
  - Followup
    - May be more likely to propose candidate answer (Moore and Maynard 2002)
    - Repeat question
  - Immediate coding (Hak 2002)

Other report, immediate coding

Case 9, Q64

MI: # .hh In<u>clu</u>ding what you have a:lready
  <u>to</u>:ld me: would you say that you have <u>e</u>:ver
  had any long term <u>phy</u>:sical or <u>me</u>:ntal
  con<u>di</u>:tions .hh (0.1) <u>i</u>:llnesses or
  disa<u>bi</u>:lities that <u>li</u>:mited what you were
  able tuh ↑<u>do</u>: .hh either <u>o</u>:n or <u>o</u>:ff tha <u>jo</u>:b.
  (1.2)

FR: A:↓:h h (0.6) We:ll I <u>qui</u>t my job because
  of tha a:<u>rthri</u>tis in my <u>fi</u>:ngers.

MI: Oka:<u>y</u>? (0.9) # (0.2)

Other report, reread question

Case 10, Q2

I: during the past four weeks have you been able to see well enough to read ordinary newsprint without glasses or contact lenses ()

R: ah just reading glasses ()

I: okay I'm just going to reread the question

R: {O}{LT} okay

I: {O} uh

I: during the past four weeks have you been able to see well enough to read ordinary newsprint without glasses or contact lenses ()

R: ah ()

R: no

I: okay

Report, directive probe

Case 4, Q35

```
MI:    Oka:y, (0.1) A:n durin' tha pa:st four
   wee:ks, didjuh ever fee:l fre:tfu:l, a:ngry,
   irrituhbull ankshuss er duhpressed?

       (0.7)
MR:    O:ah I think evrybody gets i:rrituhbull,

       (0.3)
MI:    °Mm↑hmm° So: I should sa::y- ye:s t'that
   que:ss[ch'n?]

MR:       [Ye    ]:ss.=
MI:    =O:ka:y, (0.2) .hh (0.1)
```

Particle, uncertainty, report, consideration, immediate coding

```
 Case 30, Q17


I:{LT} and have you been able to bend lift jump
   and run without difficulty and without help
   or equipment equipment of any kind ()
R: well
   I guess so
   I uh () I've run five k
   but I you don't know how you get any help
   there
I: {O} {L}
R: {O} but I'm getting slower every year
I: {L}()
I: okay
```

Immediate coding of the answer (Hak 2002)

Respondent's Phrase	Interviewer's Immediate Code	Frequency
Um-hmm, mm hmm, uh^hunh	Yes	6
I'd say so	Yes	1
Right	Yes	1
That's what it's supposed to be	Yes	1
Probably	Yes	1
I suppose	Yes	1
I don't think so	Yes	1
I doubt it	Yes	1
Not that I know of	No	1
I have no idea	Don't know	4

Case 30, Q12

I: and have people who do not know you
   understood you completely when you speak ()

R: I think so ()

R: {O} I still got a little bit of a Wisconsin
   accent but these folks

I: {O} {L} ()

I: {L}

R: they just put that aside

I: {L} okay ()

I: uh would you say like yeah on that one

I: {O} is that correct

R: {O} {LT} yeah ()

I: {LT} okay

Considerations

Case 28, Q1

I: in general would you say that your health is excellent very good good fair or poor()

R: considering everything()

I: mhmm

R: and all the all the stuff that has happened in my life I figure I'm in pretty good shape I'm still kicking I'm still able to () to work uh () everything else ()and ah ()

R: {O}even you know with all the operations and the cancer and everything else that I've had

I: {O} mhmm

R: uh () I really haven't slowed down all that doggone much ()

I: {L} okay ah

Tuning, considerations, distance, range

Case 28, Q1 (continued)

I: then would you say excellent or very good or

R: ah ()I would I can't go with excellent because uh () now with () all I put this body through ()

I: okay

R: but I would have to say bah () good to very good ()

I: {L} {LT} if you had to lean one way or the other would you say very good or good ()

R: I would have to s- ah ()

R: I would say very good ()

I: okay ()

Distancing

Case 2, Q12_13

MI: .tchhhh (0.2) Hev pee<u>pull</u> who do <u>not</u> <u>kno</u>:w <u>you</u>:
    >understood <u>you</u>< com<u>ple</u>:tely when <u>you</u> <u>s</u><u>spea</u>::k.
    (0.4)

MR: .t (0.2) E~h he(h)hhe(h)h (0.3) .hhh (0.1)
    E:::ll I: wood sa:y <u>no</u>:. hh
    (1.9)

MI: °O:ah<u>kay</u>,° have they understood you
     p<u>a</u>::rshully?
    (0.2)

MR: .t .hhh °A~h°- <u>I</u>::: wood <u>say</u> <u>ye</u>::sss. hh[h]

Generalization

Case 4, Q35

```
MI:   Oka:y, (0.1) A:n durin' tha pa:st four
      wee:ks, didjuh ever fee:l fre:tfu:l, a:ngry,
      irrituhbull ankshuss er duhpressed?
          (0.7)
MR:   O:ah I think evrybody gets i:rrituhbull,
          (0.3)
MI:   °Mm↑hmm° So: I should sa::y- ye:s t'that
      que:ss[ch'n?]
MR:      [Ye   ]:ss.=
MI:   =O:ka:y, (0.2) .hh (0.1)
```

Case 28, Q32

I: during the past four weeks have you been feeling happy or unhappy

()

R: oh

R: I guess I'm feeling pretty happy

()

I: all right

Quantification

Case 28, Q7

I: without a hearing aid and while in a
   group conversation with at least three
   other people have you been able to
   hear what is said()

R: most of the time ()

I: {O} is that a yes then or

R: {O} yes

I: {O} okay

R: {O} yes

Quantification

Case 1, Q7

```
FI:   Without a hearing aid an while in a
      group conversa:↑tion with at least
      three other pee↑pu:ll have you been
      able tuh hear what is sai:d?
      (1.7)
MR:   Not very goo:d. hh[h]
FI:                      [h]hh Would you say no:?
      (0.6)
MR:   No[:.]
```

Quantification

Case 29, Q17

```
MI:    Have you been able to be:nd (0.1) li:ft
       (0.1) ju:mp a:nd ru:n without di:fficulty:
       (0.1) an without he:lp or equipment of any
        ki:nd? .hhh
       (1.2)
FR:    A::h no:t too much ju:mpin'
       he[(h)hhe(h)h]he(h)hhe[(h)h↓he(h)h]
MI:    [O:kay?     ]           [so the      ]:n I shud
        put no:the:n fuh tha:t one [is that
        c'r↑reh-]
FR:      [A:h tha:t's     ] c'rre:ct ye:s.
```

Uncertainty elaborated with considerations

Case 49, Q40

I: and have you had any trouble
   with pain or discomfort
   during the past four weeks
   ()

R: uh   ()

I: and this is um () completely
   up to your incare
   interpretation of it

R: I guess really not ()

I: okay you want me to put no
   for that is that right

R: yeah

I: okay   ()

R: I you know I've had uh
   ()like chronic () back pain
   I guess

I: okay what would you

R: comes and goes

I: would you consider that back
   pain um pain or discomfort
   during the past four weeks
       ()

R: ah () not really ()but ah
   ()see I've had this for
   years ()

I: well um

R: and if you know if I do
   something stupid () yeah
   then I g()you know if ()

I: well um we understand if
   it's um long lasting but
   it's just () asking if you
   had any trouble with that
   pain um during the past four
   weeks {O} so have you had
   any trouble with back pain
   in the past four weeks

R: {O} no {O} no trouble
      no not really

I: no you haven't okay okay

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Summary: Reports as actions

- What do reports display?
  - Experience that respondent is using to construct on (e.g., considerations)
  - Experience or "true value" that respondent cannot translate into the terms of the question (e.g., adding a point to the response scale, other reports)
  - Answering as translation (e.g., distancing)
  - Features of question that are ambiguous given respondent's experience (e.g., quantification)
  - Uncertainty, estimation, approximation, lack of knowledge (e.g., mitigation, range)

Reports: The upshot

- Because a report leaves upshot to interviewe, a report provides a location for inquiry, diagnosis, and repair
- Actions of interviewer in next turn balance or alternate between
  - orientation to rules of standardization (e.g., followup questions, re-reading question)
  - conversational practices (e.g., immediate coding, directive probes and formulating candidate answers)

Concluding comments

- Talk of interviewers and respondents in conducting survey tasks displays their tacit knowledge
  - Performing actions
  - Deploying conversational practices
- Measurement
  - Depends fundamentally on the tacit knowledge and conversational practices of the participants
  - May be positively or negatively affected by these practices
- Standardization
  - May conflict with or be compatible with different conversational practices
- In self-administered instruments, the instrument may be treated as a conversational partner

Particles, hesitation, uncertainty, proposed candidate answer, request for confirmation

Case 49, Q40

I: and have you had any trouble with pain or
   discomfort during the past four weeks ()

R: uh ()

I: and this is um ()

I: completely up to your incare interpretation of it

R: I guess

   really not

()

I: okay

I: you want me to put no for that

I: is that right

R: yeah

I: okay