

participation in multiplying identity categories for the salesman within generally available boundaries.

11. The phenomenon of "identity multiplication" is considered more elaborately in Schenkein (1971); see Chap. 6 particularly.

12. I am borrowing the term "side sequence" from Gail Jefferson (1972).

13. Some of the many benefits I enjoy from knowing Sheila Klatzky and Roland Wolbert have certainly found their way into the previous pages.

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## chapter 3

# *Compliment Responses*

## NOTES ON THE CO-OPERATION OF MULTIPLE CONSTRAINTS

ANITA POMERANTZ

### INTRODUCTION

DEAR ABBY:

My wife has a habit of down-grading sincere compliments.

If I say, "Gee, Hon, you look nice in that dress," her reply is likely to be, "Do you really think so? It's just a rag my sister gave me."

Or if I tell her she did a great job cleaning up the house, her response might be, "Well, I guess you haven't seen the kids' room."

I find it hard to understand why she can't accept a compliment without putting herself down. And it hurts me a little. How do you explain it, Abby?

PERPLEXED

DEAR PERPLEXED:

Your wife lacks self-confidence and feels some-

what embarrassed to accept praise. Don't be hurt. Most people have difficulty accepting compliments with grace.<sup>1</sup>

"Perplexed" opens his letter with a description of something his wife purportedly does, namely, she downgrades sincere compliments. The description of the wife's downgrading of compliments is shaped into a description of how that behavior affects him.<sup>2</sup> The shaping of her behavior as a puzzle for him is illustrated in the selection of the closing identification, "Perplexed," which purportedly refers to what the writer is *relative* to his wife's responses to compliments.

The problems that the writer describes are problems which are presented to Abby for solution. The writer claims that he does not understand his wife's responses to compliments ("I find it hard to understand why . . .") and that he is hurt by those responses ("And it hurts me a little"). The problem behavior, i.e., that which he finds "hard to understand" and which "hurts" him, is his wife's not accepting (his) compliments.

Abby, in turn, treats the husband's request for an explanation of the problem behavior as legitimate by proffering, right off, an explanation: "Your wife lacks self-confidence . . ." With that answer, the wife's rejecting of compliments is turned into a symptom, or manifestation, of her low self-esteem.

Within both the husband's letter and Abby's response, the problem behavior is referred to in terms which suggest the nonattainment of the preferred response—*accepting* compliments, for example, ". . . can't accept a compliment *without putting herself down*," ". . . *embarrassed* to accept praise," ". . . *difficultly* accepting compliments" (emphasis added).

The problem behavior, then, is behavior which does not conform to a model or standard. Deviations from that model, that is, the *not* accepting of compliments, may constitute noticeable, reportable, puzzling, troublesome, and symptomatic phenomena.<sup>3</sup>

Yet it is also known that compliments are very regularly either rejected, downgraded, or only qualifiedly accepted. As Abby suggests, "Most people have difficulty accepting compliments with grace."

To examine compliment responses, then, is to examine behavior where actual performances are often discrepant from ideal or preferred performances, and where actual performances are often reported as, at least, somewhat problematic.

### RESEARCH PROBLEM

A large proportion of compliment responses deviate from the model response of accepting compliments. A close examination of those responses reveals that while rejections are frequent, they are not performed as preferred seconds.<sup>4</sup> While various sequential features suggest that determination, one indication is that most compliment responses lie somewhere in between (not at the polar extremes of) acceptances and agreements on the one hand and rejections and disagreements on the other.

In this chapter an organization will be described which accounts, in part, for the "in between-ness" of compliment responses. That organization involves the co-operation of conflicting preferences on compliment responses, that is, preferences which are concurrently relevant but not concurrently satisfiable.<sup>5</sup>

Compliment responses will be seen to be subject to separate systems of constraints. One system which is relevant is that of recipients' agreements or disagreements with prior compliments. Responses to compliments often find expression as second assessments which are formed as agreements or disagreements with the prior compliments. In the agreement/disagreement system, agreements are generally performed as preferred seconds and disagreements as dispreferred seconds.

A second system of constraints has already been mentioned: accepting or rejecting prior compliments. In this system, acceptances are generally performed as preferred seconds and rejections as dispreferred seconds.

The two systems, agreement/disagreement and acceptance/rejection, are interrelated. While the subtleties of their interrelatedness will be dealt with subsequently, as an initial statement it can be said that there is an affiliation between the preferences and the dispreferences of each system. That is, agreements are associated with acceptances and disagreements with rejections.

Given the general operation of the agreement/disagreement system and the acceptance/rejection system and the interaction between them, one would expect a high representation of agreements and acceptances as compliment responses. The data, however, run contrary to this expectation. The prevalence of disagreements and rejections is proposed to be an outcome of yet another system of constraints which co-operates along with the other systems on compliment responses. That system involves speakers' minimization of self-praise.

For recipients of compliments, the preferences to (a) agree with

and/or accept compliments and (b) avoid self-praise stand in potential conflict. Various "solutions" to, or "resolutions" of, these conflicting constraints are available to recipients of compliments. The remainder of this paper will be devoted to descriptions of constraint systems which bear on compliment responses, and solution types to conflicting constraints as displayed by compliment responses.

### CONSTRAINT SYSTEMS

Compliment responses are coordinated with the compliments which they follow. One kind of system that links compliment responses with prior compliments is that of chained actions. An action chain may be characterized as a type of organization in which two ordered actions, Action<sub>1</sub> and Action<sub>2</sub>, are linked such that the performing of A<sub>1</sub> provides the possibility of performance of A<sub>2</sub> as an appropriate next action.<sup>8</sup> A given utterance which is an instance of an Action<sub>1</sub> in a particular action chain may simultaneously be an instance of a different Action<sub>1</sub>. That is, it may provide the possibility of actualization of one of several specifiable Action<sub>2</sub>s as an appropriate next action.

One action chain for compliments consists of:

- A<sub>1</sub>: A compliments B.  
A<sub>2</sub>: B accepts/rejects the compliment.

Upon receipt of a compliment (A<sub>1</sub>), a recipient may perform an acceptance or rejection of it (A<sub>2</sub>). In this action chain, compliments have the status of "supportive" actions. Supportive actions, including offers, invitations, gifts, praise, and so on, are organized as having acceptances/rejections as relevant next actions.

A second action chain which is relevant for compliments as Action<sub>1</sub>s consists of:

- A<sub>1</sub>: A compliments B.  
A<sub>2</sub>: B agrees/disagrees with the complimentary assertion.

Upon the production of a complimentary assertion (A<sub>1</sub>), a next speaker may perform an agreement or disagreement with it (A<sub>2</sub>). In this action chain, compliments have the status of assessments, and as such, they engender recipients' agreements and disagreements.<sup>7</sup>

To reiterate, two sets of Action<sub>2</sub>s which are linked with prior com-

pliments are acceptance/rejection and agreement/disagreement. The members of the two sets are interrelated, acceptances with agreements and rejections with disagreements. Some features of the relatedness of these members will be explicated in the following sections.

#### Acceptances

Acceptances and rejections are A<sub>2</sub> alternatives subsequent to a number of supportive actions, including the class, compliments. The alternatives, however, are nonequivalent, with acceptances preferred and rejections dispreferred. One basis for the claim of nonequivalency has already been suggested: that the action of accepting compliments is referred to in talk as model behavior and that of rejecting compliments is puzzling, troublesome, symptomatic, and so forth. In addition to being considered nonequivalent, the alternatives are sequentially organized nonequivalently. They inhabit differently shaped turns and sequences and differ in their potential for termination of sequences.<sup>9</sup>

The preferred action chain, that is, the chain with a preferred A<sub>2</sub>, for a compliment as a supportive action, is:

- A<sub>1</sub>: A compliments B.  
A<sub>2</sub>: B accepts the compliment.

The acceptances are regularly accomplished with appreciations. Erving Goffman has elaborated on some aspects of such supportive interchanges:

When a ritual offering occurs, when that is, one individual provides a sign of involvement in and connectedness to another, it behoves the recipient to show that the message has been received, that its import has been appreciated, that the affirmed relationship actually exists as the performer implies, that the performer himself has worth as a person, and finally, that the recipient has an appreciative, grateful nature . . . the giving statement tends to be followed immediately by a show of gratitude.<sup>10</sup>

Subsequent to compliments, appreciations regularly take the form of *appreciation tokens*, for example, "thank you," "thanks," "thank you so much," and "well thank you." A feature of an appreciation token is that it recognizes the status of the prior as a compliment without being semantically fitted to the specifics of that compliment. That is, it does not, itself, contain a focus upon the referent of the compliment.<sup>10</sup>

If an appreciation token is to be performed as an A<sub>2</sub>, it should be performed in a next turn to a compliment.

[SBL:2.2.4.-3]

- A: Why it's the loveliest record I ever heard. (1)  
 And the organ—  
 Well *thank* you.

[KC4:33]

- F: That's beautiful. It really is (2)  
 Yeh  
 R: Thank you  
 K: Thank you

[HS:S:11]

- A: You look so nice. (3)  
 I got a new shirt.  
 R: It's very pretty.  
 A: Thank you.  
 B: Thank you.

[SBL:2.2.4.-3]

- A: Well I—I wannid to say I enjoyed your class so (4)  
 this morning, and *too*.  
 B: Well, thank you.

It seems plausible that in doing an appreciation, a recipient recognizes the prior not merely as a compliment, but as that sort of compliment which warrants an acceptance, that is, that *should* be accepted; that with his acceptance—appreciation, he may be seen to be implicitly agreeing with the prior compliment.

The evidence for the connectedness between acceptances and agreements is rather stronger than "plausibility."

### Agreements

Subsequent to assessments, agreements are A<sub>2</sub>s. A major type of agreement in this environment is one achieved with a second assessment. The referent assessed in a prior assessment is again assessed in a current turn such that current speaker's assessment (the second) stands in agreement with prior speaker's. Referent preservation across the pair of assessments is a feature of such agreements. This very prevalent agreement construction is illustrated in the instances below:

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[MC:1]

- B: Isn't he cute (5)  
 A: O:h he::: a::*dorable*

[JK:3]

- C: . . . She was a nice lady—I liked her (6)  
 G: I liked her too

[GJ:1]

- A: She's a fox! (7)  
 L: Yeh, she's a pretty girl.

The affiliation between acceptances of compliments (appreciation tokens) and agreements (second assessments in agreement) is demonstrated by the relative positioning between those components.

Acceptance components may be followed by agreement components within responses to compliments. Those two components may co-occur in recipient's next turn to a compliment; for example.

[SBL:2.2.4.-3]

- A: Oh it was just *beautiful*. (8)  
 B: Well *thank* you + Uh I thought it was quite nice . . .

[JS:11:6]

- L: *Those'r jus' beautiful*. (They're great.) (9)  
 E: Well—  
 E: Thank— + It's juh— This is *just* the *right* (weight).

or in recipient's successive turns within a compliment sequence, e.g.

[SBL:2.2.4.-3]

- A: Why it's the loveliest record I ever heard. (1a)  
 B: Well *thank* you.  
 A: And the organ—  
 A: The organ music came out so beautiful-  
 fully in it.  
 B: I thought it did *too*.

- [KC4:33] F: That's beautiful. It really is (2a)  
 R: [ (Yah)  
 K: Thank you
- F: That is beautiful  
 K: 'n that nice

Acceptance and agreement components, then, may be used in combination and/or as alternatives by recipients within compliment sequences.

### Rejections

Subsequent to instances of some classes of supportive actions, for example, offers and invitations, rejections often contain appreciation components, including negated appreciations (e.g., "No thanks") and/or accounts for the rejection. The accounts are frequently formed with reference to the occasion at hand, that is, provides something which stands as an explanation of why this particular invitation, offer, etc., at this particular time is not being accepted. A few illustrations of rejections containing both components are presented below:

- [BC:1] JOHN: You wanna sandwich? [offer] (10)  
 DAVE: No thanks. [neg. appreciation]  
 I ate before I left. [account]
- [JS:11:142] I: Bill? Whaddiyu drink. [offer] (11)  
 (:): Thank you dear [appreciation]  
 I'm not - not drinking right now. [account]
- [SBL:1.1.10.-14] B: Uh if you'd care to come over and [invitation] (12)  
 visit a little while this morning, I'll  
 give you a cup of coffee.  
 A: Heh! Well that's awfully sweet of [appreciation]  
 you,

I don't think I can make it this [account]  
 morning um, I'm running an ad in the  
 paper and—and uh I have to stay near  
 the phone.

In contrast to the type of rejection construct above, rejections to compliments are not formed with (negated) appreciations plus account. Rather, the primary way in which compliments are rejected is with disagreements or qualifications of the prior complimentary assertions.

### Disagreements

As illustrations of rejections accomplished with disagreements, the two responses reported in the "Dear Abby" letter will be briefly discussed.

- H: Gee, Hon, you look nice in that dress (A)  
 W: Do you really think so? It's just a rag my sister  
 gave me.

In response to the husband's complimentary assessment, the wife does a second evaluation, that is, *her* evaluation, which stands in some disagreement with the prior. Disagreement machinery is utilized at least with respect to recipient's selection of a contrastively classed (negative) evaluative term, "just a rag," from the positive one contained in the prior, "nice."

- H: (You) did a great job cleaning up the house. (B)  
 W: Well I guess you haven't seen the kids' room.

In (B), the wife presents an argument in response to H's compliment. She locates an intended "exception": "The kids' room" is what she proposes invalidates his favorable assessment. As in (A), the wife's response in (B) is a kind of disagreement with the prior positive characterization ("great job").

Some aspects of the interrelatedness between acceptances and agreements, and rejections and disagreements may be summarized as follows: While appreciations and agreements are affiliated components (as evidenced by their co-occurrence in local environments), they are not sequentially interchangeable. Agreements tend to occur less frequently than appreciations and seem to have more restrictive conditions for their

productions. When agreements do co-occur with appreciations, they are proffered routinely after initial appreciations. In short, while appreciations and agreements are interrelated, appreciations over agreements seem to be preferentially selected for accepting compliments.

Rejections are routinely performed with disagreements. The suggested interrelatedness is shown below:

For acceptances	For rejections
(P) Appreciation tokens	(P) Disagreements
(S) Agreements	

Note: (P) indicates preferential selection. (S) indicates an affiliated though secondary selection.

The interactions between acceptances, appreciations, and agreements, and between rejections and disagreements, do not account for the prevalence of rejections and disagreements and the relative infrequency of acceptances, particularly of agreements, which occur subsequent to compliments. That configuration is an artifact of a co-operating constraint system which stands in opposition to the satisfaction of acceptances and agreements.

#### Self-Praise Avoidance

When a recipient agrees with a prior compliment, he affiliates his position with the prior asserted position; when he disagrees, he disaffiliates his position from that of the prior. Subsequent to compliments, agreements/disagreements which retain prior referents are agreements/disagreements with praise of self.

- A: Praise of B  
R: Agreement/disagreement with praise of self

There is a system of constraints governing how parties may credit or praise themselves. *Self-praise avoidance* names a system of constraints which is enforceable by self and/or other, in that order. Some illustrative materials of enforcements by self and by other are presented below.

If self-praise is performed by a speaker, that is, if a speaker does not enforce upon himself self-praise avoidance, a recipient may in next turn make notice of the violation and enforce the constraints. One way is with critical assessments of the self-praiser:

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[GTS:2:17]

- K: ... Y'see I'm so terrific.  
A: Y'see folks, he is *very vain*, an' he realizes his mature talents compared to our meager contents of our minds. (13)

[HS:S]

- A: Just think of how many people would miss (14) you. You would know who cared.  
B: Sure. I have a *lot* of friends who would come to the funeral and say what an intelligent, bright, witty, interesting person I was.  
A: They wouldn't say that you were *humble*.  
B: No. Humble, I'm not.

[v.D.11]

- J: I heard that on my radio that night (15) Richie = I-I knew I (was hearing) your voice coming into my bedroom.  
R: O::h. Could you have taped that? = I'd've loved t'hear my voice ( )  
S: ...M(th)odesty is o(th)ne of my gr(th)estest vir-(th)ues"hh

While self-praise may not be publicly noticed on any given occasion, it is, nonetheless, a class of action which is noticeable and collectible with the possibility, on a subsequent occasion, of being turned into a complaint, a gossip item, an unfavorable character assessment, and so on.

[W.1]

- C: They got this one girl that they're always talking about you know (16)  
R: They probably say she thinks she's cute she's this, she's that

Self-praise constraints may be enforced by the speaker, himself, in a variety of ways. One way is to incorporate a disclaimer within self-praising talk, e.g.,

[BC:III:28]

- B: So he—so then, at this—y'see, —I *don't like to brag* but see he sorta like hacked outta the argument then. (17)

or qualification, e.g.,

[S.2]

- G: Ken gave that internship to Peter? I'm much better than he is! *Well maybe I shouldn't say that*. (18)

[JG:5]

- A: . . . I wonder if they're, you know, lurking around trying to think of somebody who's you know can manage it. (19)
- B: Yeah. You'd be *perfect*.  
Well you know as far as I'm concerned I would plus the fact that everybody else that they've, you know—that we've got at the store I've gone *through* throughly uh  
A: . . . and I don't figure anybody else can do it only—  
*not from the standpoint that they can't handle the job* =  
B: Umhuh.  
A: =||  
*don't misunderstand me*.  
B: Right.  
A: Bu—like Janet Brown, she's goin' to school in Northridge.  
B: Oh:  
A: An holding down a full time job here . . .

[AA:2.1]

- J: ((Overlapping talk which is not a part of this conversation has been omitted.))  
Well wuh— whadduz uh, what did Rourke say tuh you. (20)  
S: ((pause))  
S: What— did he say?  
S: Uh,  
S: ((pause))

- S: That I w'z the most fantastic employee he ever *had*.  
S: Well. Not exactly.  
S: He jus' tol' Jim en I that (we're getting a raise ).

The system of *self-praise avoidance* is not limited to violation markers by self and other. It also bears on how crediting is done. The constraints on *self-praise* are collaboratively oriented to and interactionally satisfied with *coparticipant* praise activities. That is, an orientation that *coconversationalists* display with respect to each other is to see that others are properly credited. For example, announcements of accomplishments are often initiated by one in behalf of another present:

[v.D.II]

- R: You should see this paper she wrote. —*Eighty* (21) pages. (1.0)  
R: I have to brag about you Dotly. (1.5)  
R: Quite a masterpiece  
D: Thank you.

[JS:II:142]

- E: Jo— this's, this's one *Jon* made. (22)  
M: He *di::d* you mean the *embroidery*?  
E: Ye:::s  
M: ( ) so talented:::d.

Credit may also be shifted to *coparticipant* subsequent to that *coparticipant's* praise of other-than-self.

[SBL:1.12.-27]

- B: . . . I really think it was *the C.F.O. Camp* that worked *this out for me*. (23)  
A: Uh huh, Uh huh, Well, (it's true)—You mean— (1.0)  
A: you were inspired there.

- B: Yeah. I think was uh huh. I—  
 [I  
 But it was with— it was with— *It was within yourself.*

[SBL:1.1.12.-35]

- A: So, they'll be nice to have in the house there, (24)  
 B: Mm hm.  
 [I  
 I won't— I won't worry about things.  
 B: No,  
 Uh and I think it's— and Bea, you know, well,  
 I think it's awfully nice of you to r—rent to a family with children.

[NB:4.-7]

- B: So ev'rybuddy's been nice in the 'partment (25)  
 just like with my leg eh heh hah hah!  
 [Ye::a:uh.  
 A: Well you— People *should* be nice tuh you  
 A: Agnes, yer a, thoroughly nice person tuh be nice to.

Subsequent to compliments, the preferences of (a) avoiding self-praise and (b) accepting and agreeing with the compliment are at odds with one another. If a compliment were to be agreed with, a recipient would be, at the same time, praising himself. And since agreements and acceptances are co-implicated, the satisfaction of the acceptance preference is in potential conflict with the satisfaction of self-praise avoidance.

Instances of actual compliment responses display a sensitivity to these potentially incompatible sets of constraints. An analysis of compliment responses suggests that they may be seen as types of "solutions" to the multiple preferences described above.

## SOLUTION TYPES

### Praise Downgrades

One solution type includes responses which display a sensitivity to, and partial satisfaction of, the two conflicting preferences: to accept/agree

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with prior compliment and to avoid self-praise. These responses exhibit features of both agreements and disagreements, that is, the agreements display some features of disagreements and vice versa.

An apparatus which allows for the "in between-ness" of these responses is one that includes ordered agreement and disagreement forms.

One type of agreement, an upgrade, can be called "optimal" on sequential grounds.<sup>11</sup> Upgrades are prevalent in environments in which agreements are preferred; they occur in agreement turns and sequences and typically not in combination with disagreements. Upgrading techniques include the incorporation of stronger second evaluation terms, for example,

[JS:II:28]

- J: T's—tsuh beautiful day out isn't it? (26)  
 L: Yeh it's just gorgeous . . .

[MC:1]

- A: Isn't he *cute* (27)  
 B: O::h he::s a::dorable

and added intensifiers, for example:

[SBL:2.1.8.-5]

- B: She seems like a nice little lady (28)  
 [I  
 A: Awfully nice little person.

[JS:I.11]

- E: Hal couldn' get over what a good *boy* that (29)  
 [I  
 J: Yeah  
 =That's a r— a rerry good buy.

The counterpart of an upgrade as optimal agreement is a contrastive opposite as optimal disagreement. Contrastive opposites are produced in environments in which disagreements are preferred, for example, subsequent to self-deprecations: they occur in disagreement turns and sequences and typically not in combination with agreements. The following instances are of that type: They have contrastively classed evaluative terms relative to the priors, that is, negative, critical evaluations are followed by positive, complimentary ones.



[JG:2]

- R: Did she get my card. (30)  
 C: Yeah she gotcher card.  
 R: Did she t'ink it was terrible  
 C: No she thought it was very adohrable.

[NB:IV:1-6]

- A: ...hh Oh well it's me too Portia, hh (31)  
 yihknow I'm no bottle a' milk,  
 (0.6)  
 P: Oh:: well yer easy tuh get along with, but I  
 know he's that way.

[SBL:2.1.8-8]

- R: I was wondering if I'd ruined yer- week- (32)  
 end by uh  
 A: No. No. Hm-mh. No. I just loved to  
 have-...

Subsequent to compliments, second assessments are regularly  
 neither upgraded agreements nor contrastive opposites.

#### Agreements

Recipients of praise sometimes agree with the prior praise-  
 assessment. When agreements are performed in this environment, they  
 have a characteristic form. They are second assessments which are sys-  
 tematically altered relative to the prior assessments, containing scaled-  
 down, or more moderate praise terms than the priors.

In the following sequences, praise profferer (P), incorporates  
 strong-positive evaluative terms; praise recipient (R), responds with  
 scaled-down agreements containing more moderate-positive terms.

[AP:fn]

- R: I've been offered a full scholarship at Berke- (33)  
 ley and at UCLA  
 (P) ↑ G: That's fantastic  
 ●(R) ↓ R: Isn't that good  
 [SBL:2.2.4-3]  
 (P) ↑ A: Oh it was just beautiful. (8a)  
 ●(R) ↓ R: Well thank you uh I thought it was quite nice.

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[JB:II.1-4]

- D: I'm the boys Dean out there, so I gotta new (34)  
 jo:b 'n=  
 =Yeah?  
 C: So it's a pretty good setup yihknow.  
 D: W'I my God it sounds marvelous Don.  
 (P) ↑ C:  
 ●(R) ↓ D: a- it's a good deal,  
 ↑  
 Yeah it is, it's

Scaled-down agreements exhibit features of both agreements and  
 disagreements.

Their format is that of agreement turns: They frequently have initially  
 positioned agreement tokens (Example 34) or appreciations (Example  
 8a). Although scaled down relative to the priors, they are, nonetheless,  
 similarly classed, that is, likewise positive evaluations. As such, they may  
 be treated by coparticipants as agreements with prior compliments. In the  
 following fragments, praise profferers respond to praise recipients'  
 scale-downs with subsequent agreements:

[SBL:2.2.4-3]

- A: Oh it was just beautiful. (8b)  
 ↓ B: Well thank you Uh I thought it was quite  
 nice, A nd uh  
 ↑  
 Mm hm.

[KC4:10]

- F: That's beautiful (35)  
 ↓ K: Is 'n it pretty  
 ● F: Yea::h

[KC4:35]

- F: That is beautiful (2b)  
 ↓ K: ↑ 'n that nice  
 ● R: Yah. It really is

Although scale-downs are formatted within agreement turns, they  
 may display some sequential features of disagreements. In crediting ac-  
 tivities, the respective parties, (P) and (R), have systematically discrepant  
 positions.

Activities in which praise is proffered, including compliments, ap-

precipitations, congratulations, and so on, overwhelmingly contain strong-positive evaluative terms. That is, crediting actions are preferentially performed with strong-positive descriptors.<sup>12</sup>

Recipients of praise are subject to self-praise avoidance, or modesty constraints.<sup>13</sup> Praising self with strong-positive descriptors has a violative status.

Within praise sequences, the respective parties have different collections of descriptors that they preferentially draw from: profferer selecting strong-positive terms and recipient moderate-positive. A sensitivity to that discrepancy may be displayed by the coparticipants. To avoid affirming the prior evaluative terms as his own, a speaker replaces the prior terms with ones he endorses.

Praise sequences, then, may contain the party variants in alternation. A profferer's strong-positive term (↑) may be replaced by recipient's moderate-positive term (↓) which may then be replaced in profferer's praise reaffirmation with a strong-positive term (↑).

[AP:fn]

R: I've been offered a full scholarship at Berkeley (33a)

ley and at UCLA

↑ G: That's fantastic

↓ R: Isn't that good

↑ G: That's marvelous

[GJ:fn]

The referent is L's new bride

↑ A: She's a fox!

↓ I: Yeh, she's a pretty girl.

↑ A: Oh, she's gorgeous!

[NB:VII.-2]

The referent is M's friend.

↑ E: That Pat. Isn't she a doll: (36)

↓ M: Yeh isn't she pretty.

↑ E: Oh she's a beautiful girl.

↓ M: Yeh I think she's a pretty girl.

Scaled-down agreements, then, exhibit features of both agreements and disagreements. On the one hand they are formed as agreements, namely, second praises with more moderate terms. On the other hand, the replacements of the evaluation terms constitute discrepancies which may engender successive reassertions of the parties' respective positions. Productions of scaled-down agreements seem to be subject to the

following restriction: They do not normatively occur subsequent to compliments which *directly* praise coparticipant.<sup>14</sup> Compliments which may engender scaled-down agreements contain reference terms which locate objects, persons, activities, and so on, other than coparticipant directly ("you"), namely, referents through which coparticipants are accorded credit.

In general, scaled-down agreements occur subsequent to compliments containing reference formulations consisting of other-than-you terms, for example, "it," "that," "she," "he." The scaled-down agreements retain the other-than-me referents:

[AP:fn]

R: I've been offered a full scholarship at (33b)

Berkeley and at UCLA

G: That's fantastic

R: Isn't that good

[SBL:2.2.4.-3]

The referent is a performance for which R is responsible.

A: Oh it was just *beautiful*. (8c)

R: Well *thank you* uh I thought it was quite nice.

[KC4:10]

The referent is a blanket that K is weaving.

F: That's beautiful (35a)

K: Isn't it pretty

[GJ:fn]

The referent is L's new bride.

A: She's a fox! (7b)

L: Yeh, she's a pretty girl.

[NB:VII.-2]

The referent is M's friend.

E: That Pat. Isn't she a doll: (36a)

M: Yeh isn't she pretty.

Members of compliment response classes, then, are selected in part relative to the directness with which the recipients are praised. The more indirectly recipients are credited, that is, with compliments locating referents which are isolable as external to recipients, the more likely agreements are to occur. The agreements, however, are scaled down, the

scale-down reflecting the constraints imposed by indirect praise of recipient.

*Disagreements*

Recipients of compliments frequently disagree with prior compliments. They may disagree by proposing that the creditings within the prior compliments are overdone, exaggerated, etc., and counterpropose that lesser amounts of credit are justified:

[JG:3C:6]

The referent is an athletic award R has received.

C: Well we'll hafuh *frame* that.

(37)

R: Yee-- *U*hghh it's not worth fra(h)mi(h)ng.

C: W' *sure* it is.

(1.0)

*Well?*

You'll have a whole *wall* of framings.

Tch! No, it's not really important.

Well I think it's *very* important=En I'm *very* pleased.

[SBL:2.6.-7]

B: By the way I *loved* yer Christmas card.

(38)

A: I hadda hard time, but I didn't think they were too good. . . .

[NBS:5]

A: . . . you've lost suh much weight

(39)

P: Uhh hmhh uhh hmhh well, not *that* much

[  
*Aagh Hagh Hagh!*

[BS:2.1.192]

T: AH:: you saved *me* some!

(40)

L: [(h)l's not mu(h)ch-- ((sniff))=

=Oh yer so nice=

=-tuh sa(h)ve ((sniff))

L: Yer so nice.

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[JS:II:9]

L: You brow:ght. -like a *ron* of things. (41)

E: [  
*Just a few little (thi::ngs.)*

In proposing diminutions of credit, recipients generally do not altogether negate or deny prior assertions but rather downgrade the prior terms.

[NB:5] ". . . not *that* much"

(39a)

[BS:2.1.192] "[ (h)l's not mu(h)ch-- . . . -tuh sa(h)ve . . ." (40a)

[JS:II:9] "*Just* a few little (thi::ngs.)" (41a)

Disagreements as seconds to compliments are frequently marked as *qualifications* of the prior compliments rather than directly contrastive counterassertions. Disagreement markers used with such qualifications include "though," "yet," and "but."

[AP:FN]

A: Good shot

(42)

B: Not very solid though

[JS:II:152]

L: (Lookit how pretty that looks.)

(43)

J: Yeah.

A: I don't know.

B: ( )

Oh that does look pretty with the ( )

E: ( ) though. [  
It isn't a very good

M: ( )

[MC:I.-37]

L: -and yer-- -logical reasoning. -- -is taking (44)

the upper hand as you go along. =

=Oh yah.

Yeh--you're not frustrated in six different ways.

W: No, No,

- L: And this all shows, -in everything yuh say 'n do ez yih go along.  
 W: Yet I've got quite a distance tuh go yet.

[KC4:38]  
 R: ( ) beautiful colors ( ) such a (nice) rich (45)  
 color:

- K: But *real* tartons are much more subdued in their coloring than these vegetable dyes . . .

[BH:1-A:23]  
 K: Those tacos were good!  
 R: You liked them . . .  
 K: I loved 'em, yes.  
 R: I'm glad, but uh, next time we have 'em we'll, the uh, the tortillas a little bit more crispy . . .

Although these compliment responses are not contrastive opposites but are rather diminutions and qualifications of prior praises, they nonetheless are treated as disagreements. Subsequent to such disagreements, praise profferers may challenge or disagree with the diminutions and qualifications and reassert praise:

[AP:FN]  
 A: Good shot (42a)  
 R: Not very solid (though)  
 A: Ya' get any more solid, you'll be terrific

[JS:II:9]  
 L: You *brought* -like a *ton* of things. ( ) (41b)  
 E: I  
 J: Just a few little (things.)  
 L: Oh (are you kidding?) (God ) (Filled up the ).

[SBL:3:6-7]  
 R: By the way I *loved* yer Christmas card. (38a)

- A: I hadda hard time, but I didn't think they were too good, but--  
 A: -finally,  
 B: I (Those) were lovely. I thought they were lovely.  
 A: I Uh huh,  
 A: thanks,=  
 A: =-finally had tuh settle on something."  
 B: Well I thought uh ( ) choice was *beautiful*.

To reiterate, disagreements as seconds to compliments display features which are similar to agreements as compliment responses. A large set of both agreements and disagreements are scale-downs of the prior praise accorded to recipients. Negotiations which occur within these compliment sequences follow predictable directions: Recipients downgrade prior praise, and profferers upgrade the prior downgrades. Praise downgrades represent one type of solution to the incompatible preferences operating on compliment responses—that of "compromise." With downgrades, the referent of the prior is preserved, but the praise is neither totally agreed with (i.e., it is responsive to self-praise avoidance) nor totally disagreed with (i.e., it is also responsive to acceptance/agreement preferences).

Agreement and disagreement downgrades are responses which partially satisfy each of the conflicting preferences.

#### Referent Shifts

A second solution type of compliment responses works on the principle of referent shifts. In a compliment (A<sub>1</sub>) a recipient is praised either directly or indirectly; in this type of response, the recipient performs a subsequent praise (A<sub>2</sub>) which has other-than-self as referent.

- A<sub>1</sub>: A praises B.  
 A<sub>2</sub>: B praises other-than-self.

Two kinds of referent shifts, differentiated with respect to constructional and sequential features, are discussed below.

## Reassignment of Praise.

ANITA POMERANTZ

In responding to a compliment, a recipient may reassign the praise, shifting the credit from himself to an other-than-self referent, for example, an object. The following sequence contains one such typical credit shift:

[WC:YCC.-4]

R: You're a good rower. Honey. (47)  
 J: These are very easy to row. Very light.

In R's compliment, J is praised as "a good rower." In J's second to the compliment, the type of boat is praised as "very easy to row. Very light." In response to the compliment, J forms an assessment in which the referent being praised is shifted from himself to other-than-himself, namely, the boat.

When the placement of credit is negotiated within compliment sequences, the amount of credit, per se, is not generally simultaneously negotiated. Routinely, if a second has a shift in the agent being credited, it does not have downgraded evaluational terms. Descriptors in seconds are typically selected relative to the shifts and usually are at least as strong as the prior descriptors.

[WS:YMC.-4]

R: You're a good rower. Honey. (47a)  
 J: These are very easy to row. Very light.

The praise within the compliment is accomplished with the phrase, "a good rower. Honey." In the compliment response, the praise terms, "very easy" and "very light," are co-selected for the type of boat. Whereas "easy" and "light" are positive descriptors, they are nonetheless upgraded with the intensifier "very."

Negotiations over the placement of credit are structured relative to the sets of constraints operant on the respective parties. Profferers of credit accord credit to coparticipants. Recipients of credit shift credit away from themselves. These positions are particularly visible in the following materials.

In (2c) below, F credits K by focusing on K as the weaver of the blanket which is being admired:

[KC4:31]

F: ... What you making? (2c)  
 K: It's a blanket

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- F: Did you weave that yourself
- K: I wove this myself
- D: She wove all of this herself
- F: Ya kidding

Later in the sequence, F admires the blanket with a positive assessment. K responds to the positive assessment first with a scaled down agreement, and then in her next turn with credit shift (←) away from herself as weaver:

[KC4:35]

F: That is beautiful (2d)  
 K: I 'N that nice  
 R: Yah. It really is  
 ←K: It wove itself. Once it was set up=

A shift in focus from recipient, within the compliment, to "it" or other-than-self, within the response, may function like a disagreement. The profferer's credit of the recipient and the recipient's focusing of the credit away from self to "it" may be oriented to as a discrepant position, with the reinstitution of respective positions in alternation across a series of turns. In the following sequences, (→) marks turns in which coparticipants are credited; (←) marks turns in which credit is focused away from self.

[BC:IV:27]

→B: ... I love the way you do that commercial. eh! (48)  
 A: Mhhh!  
 →B: hhhh! It's original eh!h!  
 A: Well, you know, It's uh...v- uh... o-oddly enough, have yuh tried the stuff?  
 B: No I have never tried it. I- I mean to.  
 ←A: For shame. It is beautiful bread.  
 B: hhh you know, eh I- it- it's on a prob'ly onna saturation campaign so they- it's on all day.  
 A: Mh hm,  
 →B: An', after yuh hear it o:ver an' over an' over again, it's a pleasure when you do it. eh! heh

- A: Well the thing is, I figure that if I wouldn't wanna hear it over again the same way I heard it before, why should you.  
 B: hhh! heh rightht.  
 ←A: Y'know Yuh—Y'know the guy who was really great about that was a comedian named Joe Cook.

[SBL:1.1.12.-35]

- ←A: So, they'll be nice to have in the house there. (49)  
 B: Mm hm.  
 A: I won't— I won't worry about things.  
 B: I No.  
 ←A: Uh and I think it's— and Bea, you know, well I think it's awfully nice of you to f—rent to a family with children.  
 B: Well, that was uh *built* for that, it's in a— too good a *school* area.  
 A: Yeah.  
 B: You know, That's what I intended.  
 →B: Well  
 A: some— uh so many people, though, uh, you know, they're just won't— *do* this.  
 B: They have to go *someplace*.  
 A: Well I know it.  
 B: Un huh,  
 A: I know, and I feel this.  
 [ISL:11]  
 →B: . . . You're very intell'gent *person* by the way. (50)  
 A: You're bout the most intell'gent 'n— that I've talked to and I've talked to *many* over here.  
 →B: Well,  
 A: —That seem to *know* uh, y'know, a little—, its nice to hear somebody ehhe hchh y'know hehh—  
 ←A: Well it's important stuff you gotta really do your own research. . . .

Credit shifts as a solution type are responsive to the two sets of constraints discussed earlier. The focusing of praise away from self in the compliment response displays a sensitivity to self-praise avoidance. The compliment response consisting of a second praise (albeit refocused) is partially supportive of, that is, a partial warrant for or legitimization of, the prior praise.

#### Returns

A second kind of referent shift are those within return compliments. Recall that a general procedure used in second assessment agreements is that of referent retention. A second speaker refers to the same referent as has the prior speaker within an assessment which stands in agreement with the prior assessment. Referent retention is one kind of interturn linking system for topical, sequential units.

Within returns, a slightly different linking system is employed: Rather than retaining *same* referent, a second speaker preserves the *relationship* of referent to speaker across the turns. That is, if the referent of prior speaker's talk is his coparticipant, namely, "you," a next speaker may refer to his coparticipant, namely, "you."  
 The action sequence for return compliments is:

- A<sub>1</sub>: A compliments B.  
 A<sub>2</sub>: B compliments A.

A recipient of a compliment may proffer a return compliment—a compliment which is "similar" to the prior compliment. Returns use an agreement construct. In contrast to the prior credit shifts (from "you" to "it") that are typically viewed as disagreements (i.e., as recipients' repudiations of "it not me"), returns are constructed as agreements (i.e., "and you too").

[MC1]

- C: Ya' sound (justiz) real nice (51)  
 • D: Yeah you soun' real good too

[NB:1.1.-2]

- E: Yer lookin good, (52)  
 • G: Great. So'r you.

[JG:-7]

R: Well anyway nice talking to you ( ) (53)

• A: Nice talkin  
to you honey . . .

[NB:VII.-4]

A: . . . Ih w'z jis'-de/efhtful tuh come down (54)  
there that day, 'n meet the--crowd, 'n,

• M: Well-- I, --jis'  
w'z so tickled thetche di:d.

[NB:VII.-13]

A: . . . en, gee I sure hadda nice (55)

M: Yeh-  
time the other day ih w'z=

• M: Oh:well:l=  
beautiful.  
• A: =-jist loved havin' you come up Agnes . . .  
• M:

Compliment returns, like other agreement constructs, provide possible completion points for sequences. Return compliments regularly terminate praise sequences.

As a solution type, returns offer a procedure through which a kind of agreement is performed which simultaneously satisfies the constraint of self-praise avoidance.

### CONCLUSION

The productions of compliment responses are sensitive to the co-operation of multiple constraint systems. One preference system is that of *supportive Actions*, that is, responses which legitimize, ratify, affirm, and so on, prior compliments. A second constraint system is that of *self-praise avoidance*.

With reference to the prior compliments, compliment responses fall into two broad groups: evaluation shifts and referent shifts.

Evaluation shifts take the form of praise downgrades, where recipients praise the same referents as are praised in the prior, incorporating evaluative descriptors which are less positive than the prior. Referent

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shifts include compliment responses in which recipients of praise proffer subsequent praises of other-than-self referents.

The two kinds of shifts reflect the co-operation of supportive seconds and self-praise avoidance. In praise sequences, praise may be scaled down (↓) and/or refocused away from recipient (←).

[KC4:35]

F: That is beautiful (2c)

↓ K: 'N that nice  
R: Yah. It really is  
← K: It wove itself. Once it was set up=

Although not cleanly differentiated, the various classes of compliment responses tend to collect in particular sequential environments.

Returns are frequent in openings and closings of interactions, for example, in an opening:

[NB:I.1.-2]

E: Yer lookin good, (52a)

• G: Great. So'r you.

in a closing:

[JG:-7]

B: Well anyway nice talking to you ( ) (53a)

• A: Nice talkin to  
you honey . . .

Returns are a kind of reciprocity response. The producing of returns is in part dependent upon the availability to second parties of complement praise-worthy referents to those that occur in first compliments.<sup>15</sup>

Appreciations are prevalent as responses to compliments when the parties are asymmetrically related to the referents of the compliments. In the following excerpts, second parties do not have available complement referents to the referents praised by first parties. They proffer appreciations as seconds. In (2e) and (54a) below, the referent of F's compliments is a blanket K is weaving.

[KC4:33]

F: That's beautiful It really is (2f)

• R: Yah  
• K: Thank you

[KC4.3.7]

- F: ... beautiful though, really beautiful (54a)  
 K: Thank you

In (4a) and (1a) below, the referent of A's compliments is a performance for which B was responsible.

[SBI.:2.2.4.-3]

- A: Well I—I wannid to say I enjoyed your class so (4a)  
 this morning, and *too*.  
 B: Well, thank you

[SBI.:2.2.4.-3]

- A: Why it's the loveliest record I ever (1b)  
 heard. And the organ—  
 B: [ Well thank you.

In (38b) below, the referent of B's compliment is a Christmas card A sent her; B did not send A one.

[SBI.:3.6.-7]

- B: By the way I loved yer Christmas card, (38b)  
 A: Oh:: Thank y—  
 B: [ Thank you so much,

Praise downgrades are prevalent subsequent to compliments with other-than-you references incorporated. Appreciation tokens show a priority positioning over agreements and disagreements:

[SBI.:2.2.4.-3]

- A: Oh it was just *beautiful*. (8d)  
 B: Well thank you Uh I thought it was quite nice.

[SBI.:3.6.-7]

- B: By the way I loved yer Christmas card, (38c)  
 A: Oh:: thank y—  
 B: [

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- B: Yers was jus' ( )  
 (1.0)  
 A: Oh::: Thank you.  
 B: [ ( ) ]  
 A: I hadda hard time, but I didn't think  
 they were too good, but— -- -- finally.  
 B: [ (Those) were  
 lovely. I thought they =  
 A: [ Uh huh. Thanks,  
 B: =were lovely.  
 A: --finally hadtuh settle on something . . .

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The *Los Angeles Times*, 28 Dec. 1975, Part VIII, p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> The structuring of the description of her behavior as *his* problem is a design which is well fitted to the format of such letters as "Dear Abby" and "Dear Ann Landers." A warrant for writing such letters often involves the posing of a problem that the letter-writer has, a problem with, as yet, no adequate solution. The printed responses, in such cases, typically include proffered solutions.

<sup>3</sup> It has been brought to my attention that therapy-oriented groups have developed "exercises" in which participants practice accepting compliments and agreeing with them. One such group are those who practice co-counseling.

<sup>4</sup> There are a host of sequential features which preferred and dispreferred seconds display. One feature of preferred seconds is their occurrence in initial positions of turns. In compliment responses, when acceptances and appreciations appear, they typically occur as first items within turns. For a more complete discussion of some features of preferred and dispreferred seconds, see Pomerantz (1975, Chap. III).

<sup>5</sup> This piece of work on multiple preferences is an extension of previous work on the interaction of preference systems. In particular, see Sacks and Schegloff (1978), and Pomerantz (1975, Chap. V).

<sup>6</sup> The kind of organization which is referred to by "action chains" is not unlike that of "adjacency pairs" in many of its features. See Schegloff and Sacks (1973) for a description of features of the organization of adjacency pairs. An essential difference between adjacency-pair and action-chain organization, in the opinion of this author, lies in the following:

A basic rule of adjacency pair operation is: given the recognizable production of a first pair part, on its first possible completion the speaker *should* stop and a next speaker *should* start and produce a second pair part from the pair type the first is recognizably a member of (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973, p. 296; emphasis added).

That is, if a recognizable first pair-part is produced, then upon that production its second pair-part is conditionally relevant.



With "action chains," what is being proposed is that an Action<sub>2</sub> or "second part-part" is not a *should* but a *may* for recipient. That is, an option among several specifiable options. In part, it is in the performing of the second that a prior becomes treated (formulated) as one or another first action which is linked with that given second. Although some number of appropriate Actions<sub>2</sub> may be available subsequent to a given prior, initial evidence suggests that those alternative options are themselves preferentially ordered relative to each other.

<sup>7</sup> Pomerantz (1975, Chap. V).

<sup>8</sup> See note 4.

<sup>9</sup> (Goffman (1971, pp. 63-64 and Chap. 3).

<sup>10</sup> There are a range of ways of *showing* appreciation. For example, upon receiving a gift, appreciation may be shown by displaying the gift, admitting the gift with strongly positive assessments, and so on. That is, in addition to *the giving* being an object for appreciation, *what* is given may also serve as a referent for appreciations. Subsequent to compliments, appreciations are routinely done with appreciation tokens and not with strongly positive assessments of same referent as is located in the prior.

<sup>11</sup> For a more detailed discussion of some sequential features of "optimalis," see Pomerantz (1975, Chap. V).

<sup>12</sup> Examples of creditings performed with strong positive descriptors include:

[BC:IV-27]  
B: I love the way you do that commercial. eh-hh! (56)

[SRI:2.2.4-4]  
The referent is a record for which the recipient is responsive.  
A: . . . Oh it was wonderful. I would LOVE (uh have one. (57)

[BC:IV-9]  
B: And I'll miss you very very much. (58)

[AP:fn]  
The referent is a scholarship recipient has been offered.  
G: That's fantastic (33c)  
A: "Modesty" is an achievement subsequent to compliments, with, for example, laugh tokens and incompletions.

[NB:VII-4]  
E: hhh Marjie I-I marvel atche really. Eh you fascinate me. (59)  
B: hh ho ho hh  
E: I've never seen a gal: like you.

M: Echhedna, uh!  
E: I mean it.  
M: (falsetto) No, no no.

[SRI:1.10.11]  
B: Well, they're lucky to have you.  
A: Well, I don't know!w heh . . . (60)

[BC:IV-27]  
B: I love the way you do that commercial. eh-hh! (48a)  
A: Mhh!  
B: hhhh! It's original eh-hh!

A: Well, you know, it's uh:::v-uh::: . . .  
A: "A sample of compliments in which coparticipants are directly praised (with "you" as references) is included below:

[WS:YMC-4]  
B: You're a good rower, Honey. (47b)

[SI:11]  
B: . . . You're very intelligent person by the way. You're about the most intelligent 'n--the! I've talked to and I've talked to many over here. (50a)

[NB:VII-4]  
E: hhh Marjie I-I marvel atche really. Eh you fascinate me. (59a)  
M: hh ho ho hh  
E: I've never seen a gal: like you.

[BC:IV-27]  
B: I love the way you do that commercial. eh-hh! (48b)

[BC:IV-69]  
B: And I'll miss you very much. (61)

[GTS:1.66]  
E: I like you now. (62)  
A: There are instances in which returns are modified and adjusted to asymmetric circumstances.  
The following datum is taken from a two-way call in a radio show. The moderator (A) will be temporarily on leave in order to go into the hospital. The caller (B) initiates the following compliment sequence:

[BC:IV-69]  
B: And, I'll miss you very very much (61a)  
(pause)  
A: Thank you.

A: I'm gonna miss it here too which is kinda strange.

B: No it isn't.

A: A man--  
(Because you know) how much we all like you.

A: I think a man is very lucky.

A: I think a man is very lucky when he has a job that he misses when 'e isn't there.

A's initial compliment response is an appreciation ("Thank you."). The appreciation is

positioned in next turn to compliment. Next turn to compliment is an environment in which returns alternately occur. That is, the "thank you" is positioned in a place where a return reciprocal compliment, for example, "I'll miss you too" typically would occur if it were to be proffered. The parties, however, are not symmetrically related: Whereas a caller "knows" a moderator by name, personality, and so on, the moderator frequently finds himself talking to an anonymous caller. In such circumstances, returns, which are subject to consistency constraints, are generally unavailable as seconds.

Even though a "thank you" may suffice as A's second to B's compliment, A continues his turn with a return which is adjusted to their asymmetric circumstances. In the first compliment, B is the referent: "And I'll miss you very very much"; in the return there is a referent replacement: "I'm gonna miss it here too . . . ."

The fact that returns tend to be performed whenever they can be, and that adjustments are made so as to make them performable when they might otherwise be unavailable, is consistent with the previous observation that they simultaneously satisfy two constraint systems which are not simultaneously satisfied within other classes of responses discussed.

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## chapter 4

# *On the Achievement of a Series of Stories*

ALAN L. RYAVE

A rather commonplace conversational activity is telling stories and listening to stories.<sup>1</sup> On occasion a story appears as an isolated instance surrounded by a variety of possible conversational structures, but more frequently it seems to be that stories are manifested in clusters of two or more.

In the data principally to be focused upon here and in each case presented, there occurs a cluster of two stories and related story commentary, told at separate times by two conversational participants. For example, in the first instance presented below, Peter tells a story about a dangerously close call he experienced at a fairgrounds, and then Gordon follows with a story dealing with the possible prevention of trouble in amusement park rides in Long Beach. And, observe in the second instance, A presents a story dealing with the fact that an accident was witnessed which evidently was not subsequently reported on by the media, whereupon, B tells a story of a witnessed event that received the same fate. These instances, and two others, are presented immediately below, and the reader is encouraged to examine them carefully before