Discourse and Communication:
Invitation to Contribute to a Special Issue

"Conversation Analysis and Conversational Technologies" Issue Editors:
Saul Albert, Hendrik Buschmeier, Elizabeth Stokoe, & Wyke Stommel

We are pleased to invite researchers to submit a paper to *Discourse and Communication* for a special issue on conversation analysis and conversational technologies.

Conversational technologies are currently in the headlines as OpenAI's *ChatGPT*, Microsoft's *Bing*, and Google's *Bard* have opened chatbot interfaces for large language models to a mass market. But how "conversational" are these technologies in terms of being able to recognise and use fundamental conversational structures like turn-taking, sequence organisation, and repair? Ethnomethodological conversation analysis (EMCA) researchers have had a long and critical relationship with the development of such technologies (see, e.g., the works collected in Luff, 1990), and have offered foundational empirical perspectives on human-computer interaction (HCI, e.g., Suchman 2007) as part of a wider movement of phenomenology-informed scepticism towards claims of artificial intelligence (AI) (Dreyfus, 1992). Now, in the early 2020s, we have reached the point where studies of everyday conversation regularly involve our interactions with and through such technologies (Mlynář et al, frth; Porcheron et al, 2018). Detailed analysis of interactions with everyday conversational technologies have inevitably, therefore, drawn on studies of what Schegloff (2007: xiii-xiv) describes as 'generic orders of organization' such as the 'turn-taking problem' (e.g., Pelikan & Broth, 2016; Cyra & Pitsch, 2017), the 'trouble' problem (e.g., Pelikan, Broth & Keevallik, 2020; Stommel, de Rijk & Boumans, 2022), and the problem of overall structural organisation (e.g., Pitsch et al, 2009; Licoppe & Rollet, 2020).

However, while these and other studies have contributed to a burgeoning field of research applying EM/CA concepts and methods within HCI, there are still many unanswered ontological and methodological questions. For example, how (if at all) should we conceptualize conversational technologies as 'participants' in conversation (Krummheuer, 2015; Alač, 2016)? And are the training data used to develop conversational technologies—often based on written texts or simulated interaction—ever capable of enabling such systems to emulate real conversation (Stokoe et al, 2020)? Such questions point towards the possibility of developing a more comprehensive program of ethnomethodological respecifications of AI, accountability, and agency (Yu-cheng 2022; Reeves, 2022). Perhaps bringing together EMCA single case analyses of conversational technology in action (Schegloff, 1987) can contribute to fundamental research into the generic orders of conversational structure—to forms of "analysis that will yield the technology of conversation" itself (Sacks, 1984, p. 413).

The aim of the special issue is to publish manuscripts based on empirical studies examining any conversational technology domain, including human-computer interaction (e.g., voice assistants, dialogue systems, social robots, chatbots, etc.) as well as technologies for evaluating human-human social interaction (e.g., speech analytics, sentiment analysis, benchmarking frameworks etc.), through conversation analysis and related approaches in ethnomethodology, discursive psychology, and membership categorization analysis. Methodological, theoretical and review papers on the role and potential of conversation analysis, and related approaches, as an approach to examine conversational technologies are also encouraged.

The special issue also aims to incorporate responses to and commentaries on papers from conversational technology experts working in industry.

Abstracts of up to two pages (single space, 11-point font minimum, to allow space for references and data, if included) are sought initially and will be reviewed to check that

proposed papers fit with the special issue scope. It is also important that manuscripts reflect the aims and scope of the journal, and these can be accessed via the journal homepage.

Please submit a structured abstract containing an introduction, objectives, methods (for empirical studies, e.g., dataset, ethics, analytic approach) or approach (for methodological, theoretical and review papers), findings/key points, and conclusion/implications.

Key dates:

- Abstracts due: April 28th, 17:00 AOE, 2023.
- Notification date: May 19th, 2023
- Completed articles due: September 30th, 2023.

Submission of Abstracts and Full Articles:

Your abstract of up to two pages should be sent to the special issue editors in the first instance by email: e.stokoe@lse.ac.uk. The special issue editors will review all abstracts to ensure that proposed papers fit with the remit of this issue. If your abstract is accepted, a full article of no longer than 4500 words should be submitted by September 11th 2023, though their publication remains subject peer review. Authors should closely adhere to the journal guidelines about article types and the submission process.

The guest editors for this special issue are Saul Albert, Hendrik Buschmeier, Elizabeth Stokoe, & Wyke Stommel. Enquiries about this special issue should be directed to the guest editors.

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