

Turn-taking



Mother: *And how's my pretty little darling then?*

Baby: *Ugh ... Ugh.*

Mother: *O what a nice bit of wind that was! You must be feeling better!*

Baby: *Goo, goo.*

This brief snatch of 'conversation' illustrates one important fact about human speech: **people take it in turns to talk**. Even if one of the participants cannot speak, the other one pretends that the non-talker has taken their turn.

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But we can go further than simply noting the phenomenon of turn-taking. We can, in addition, describe how a typical conversation might proceed. The speakers are taking part in a social ritual partially prescribed by convention. In a dialogue, utterances often occur **in pairs**:

• Question: *What's the time?*

• Answer: *Ten past three.*

• Greeting: *Hi, Jo.*

• Greeting: *Why hallo, Bill.*

• Offer: *Would you like a cup of coffee?*

• Acceptance: *Yes, please.*

• Apology: *I'm terribly sorry.*

• Minimization: *Please don't mention it.*

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Paired utterances are not, of course, inevitable, and triple utterances are also frequent:

Question: *What's the time?*

Answer: *Ten past three.*

Acknowledgement: *Thanks.*

Turn-taking



Write a dialogue between two people standing at a bus station.

Write a dialogue between a husband and his wife.

Turn-taking



Write a dialogue between two people standing at a bus station.

A: When does the next bus to the city center arrive?

B: It will arrive in 20 minutes.

Write a dialogue between a husband and his wife.

Wife: Can you help me with the housework today?

Husband: Sure, darling.