

The role of lexical and syntactic predictions in timing of conversational turns

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Natural conversations are every-day verbal interactions in which two or more speakers freely alternate in speaking without any overt external constraints regulating who speaks and for how long. Despite this externally free organization, conversations are characterized by rapid exchange of turns. Duration of turn-transitions, i.e. the time between the end of a turn and the beginning of the next one is most frequently between 0-200 ms. Such short turn-transition times are surprising from a cognitive processing point of view because listeners who speak next need to accomplish several tasks in this short time window: to understand the current turn and to prepare the production of their own turn. The fast turn-transitions suggest that participants cannot just wait until the other has finished speaking and then start to speak, but must do advance planning. Planning of a next turn can probably only occur if the listener (next speaker) can anticipate the *content* of a current turn before it finishes. Already since the seventies, researchers have also suggested that speakers must also predict *when* a turn will come to an end, so that their turns can be timed closely to the end of the previous turn (Sacks et al. , 1974; Duncan, 1974). The studies which will be presented in this talk investigate the relationship between these two processes, anticipation of a turn's content and the prediction of when the turn ends. More precisely, they study *whether the prediction of the (lexical and syntactic) content of conversational turns facilitates the estimation of their duration.*