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Editors:
Sous la direction de:
Organizadores:

Maria da Graça PINTO
João VELOSO
Belinda MAIA

Turn-maintaining signals in spoken Portuguese

ISABEL GALHANO RODRIGUES

F.L.U.P. (Portugal)

0. Turn-taking signals: these signals are defined as the conversational signals which help the speaker to take, to maintain and to give the turn, and the hearer to return or to reclaim for himself the speaker's turn. They belong to the interactional level of conversation. Turn-maintaining signals are one kind of turn-taking signals, i.e. those which help the speaker to continue his turn, attracting the hearer's attention and avoiding any other hearer taking the turn [1]. They can be of different natures, i. e., linguistic non-linguistic and non-verbal, such as gestures and mimic [2].

1. CATEGORIES OF ANALYSIS

The theoretical background of this investigation is the result of a synthesis of the theory of American and German etnomethodologic conversation analysis with some principles of discourse analysis, namely those of the Geneva school [3]. Of this syntheses resulted the following categories:

- **Turn-taking:** the way the roles of speaker /hearer change from one person to the other (cf. Sachs/Schegloff/Jefferson, 1974) [4] .

- **Turn:** defined by Goffman (1974: 201) as what the speaker says and does when it is his turn [5].

- **Conversational act:** this unit seems to correspond to the «move» [6].

- **Conversational signals:** the linguistic and non-linguistic micro-structural elements which help speaker/hearer(s) to achieve their communicative purposes in conversation.

2. CONVERSATIONAL SIGNALS

2.1. Turn-taking-signals: there are five groups of these signals (cf. Rodrigues, 1996: 67-87):

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[1] This article represents one part of my recent research on turn-taking signals of spoken Portuguese (Rodrigues, 1996).
[2] The non-verbal signals will not be dealt with here.
[3] A detailed explanation of this synthesis can be found in Rodrigues, 1996.
[4] *Turn-taking* corresponds to the *exchange* of discourse analysis theory (cf. Moeschler, 1987).
[5] cited in Henne/Rehbock , 1982: 22. It corresponds in some way to the *intervention* of the Geneva School (cf. Roulet et al., 1985). Intervention comprises at the same time the move (cf. Goffman, 1976:272). This lack of correspondence is due to the fact that within the Geneva school hearer activities were not considered *out-of-turn* activities. «*Out-of-turn*» activities are those produced by the participant who does not have the turn (cf. Yngve, 1970: 568).
[6] It is more than Searle's «*speech act*» (cf. Searle,1969), because it comprehends not only the illocutive value, from the point of view of the speaker, but also the in-auditive value, from the point of view of the hearer, i.e. the effect of speaker's utterance on the hearer (cf. Henne/Rehbock, 1982: 17).

three for the speaker, as in-turn activities, with which the speaker 1. **takes** the turn (with/without interruption of the previous speaker, with/without pre-selection of the last speaker), 2. **maintains** the turn (with/without running the risk of losing it), 3. **gives** the turn (or is obliged to give it); two for the hearer as out-of-turn activities, with which the hearer 4. **returns** the turn (agreeing/disagreeing with the speaker) or 5. **reclaims** the turn. These linguistic and non-linguistic signals can be inserted in **interactional strategies** that are regularly used by participants to achieve their interests in conversation [7]. The most common strategies are:

- *Focussing activities* – with which the speaker attracts the hearer's attention – such as 1. **Preparing activities** in the form of a) **announcements** [8], like sentences announcing the illocutive value, the proprositional content or the modality of what is going to be said – pre-fixed-announcements [9] –, and sentences containing only the plan of the following sequences – pre-announcements; b) *linguistic and non-linguistic signals* indicating that the speaker takes the turn or continues to hold the turn. They have in general a co-function as topographic signals (cf. 2.2.2); 2. *Syntactic focussing* – cleft-sentences that attract the hearer's attention to the topic, which coincides with the focus of the communicative activities (cf. Meyer-Hermann, 1993: 27); and 3. *Semantic focussing* – the focus can be emphasised through the meaning of certain lexical elements, like «*repare*», «*veja só*». The vocative forms can be included in this group (cf. Rodrigues, 1996:72).

- *Focussing off* – the speaker diverts the hearer's attention from the focus of the communicative activities using other means [10].

- *Hesitation phenomena* – linguistic, non-linguistic elements or simply silent pauses that reflect the speaker's cognitive activities.

- *Repetitions* of words, sentences or parts of sentences, which function as a means of imposing the taking of the turn or of avoiding an interruption from the other participant.

- *Post-poned focussing* with which the speaker controls if the pronounced utterance was well-received and how it shall be received [11].

- *Prosody, mimic and gestures* – in the cases where the speaker takes the risk of losing the turn, an increase of voice intensity and of gestual activities is frequent. Intonation is as a rule ascending, calling the hearer's attention (cfr. Schwitalla 1976: 83).

2.2. Other conversational signals: interactive, topographic and modal signals: Besides turn-taking activities there are other kinds of important aspects to be considered during conversation

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[7] These activities seem to be directly related to the personality of the speaker. (cf. Thimm/Rademacher/Augenstein, 1994). According to the experiences realised by the authors, hesitation phenomena are typical for submissive persons, whereas repetitions and interruptions are frequently produced by dominant persons, in order to control the conversation. On my opinion the focussing activities should also be included in the last group. Due to the restrictions imposed, it was not possible to consider here the feature «personality».

[8] From Rehbein's definitions of announcements (Rehbein, 1983) were chosen those that seemed to be of greater interest for this study (cf. Rodrigues, 1996: 71-72).

[9] Rehbein did not include modality in his definition of pre-fixed announcements (cf. Rehbein, 1983: 237). Due to the examples found in the corpus it was necessary to enlarge this definition, in order to consider the announced modality.

[10] Certainly based on Schelgloff's concepts of *focussing-off* and *focussing-on* (cf. Schlegloff, 1972, cit. in Kallmeyer, 1978:196), Kallmeyer (1978: 214) calls this strategy *Abweden* (focussing-off), the opposite activity to *Zuwenden* (focussing-on). The former type of activities is more common when the speaker wants to end / give the turn.

[11] In this way he can conduct the way the hearer reacts to his turn (cf. Rehbein, 1979: 63). These expressions can either cause a return activity of the speaker or reinforce the speaker's utterance itself, re-focussing it (cf. Rodrigues, 1996: 76-77). Common forms of re-focussing strategies are the tag-questions.

to which correspond different kinds of conversational signals: 1. the argumentative, contra-argumentative, evaluative (correction, paraphrase and precision) and addition/alternative relations between the conversational acts, which are established by the **interactive signals (argumentative, contra-argumentative, evaluative** and **geographic**, cf. Rodrigues, 1996: 64-65); 2. the way themes are linked together, i.e., if a new theme is to be introduced or if an already treated theme is to be re-taken, which is marked by the **topographic signals** (according to their capacity of introducing something new at the beginning of a turn or between turns, or to mark the end of preceding themes/turns, we can consider the **opening, closing** and **transition** signals (cf. Ibidem, 65-66)); 3. the reactions of the participants regarding their expectations and attitudes towards context, content of the utterances or other participants which are expressed by the modal signals (cf. Ibidem, 66-67). Both the interactive and the topographic signals have an important role in maintaining the turn: they occur most of the times at TRPs (transitional relevance place) [12] and are found introducing asides, where they realise a kind of framing (cf. Goffman, 1976: 264-265).

3. THE CORPUS

The analysed corpus consists of some radio interviews on the same subject and with well educated speakers. The transcription conventions used are the following:

(,)	slight stop in an utterance	(:)	extended vowel
(..)	slight pause	(.)	descending intonation
(...)	longer pause	(')	ascending intonation
(pause)	very long pause	(-)	suspended intonation
(h)	hesitation phenomena	(?)	interrogative intonation (descending + ascending)
eh(:)	typical hesitation phenomena	(!)	exclamation (ascending + descending)
pois	higher voice intensity	p o i s	extended word
(pois?)	eventual text	(laughs)	TEXT + non-linguistic signals which accompany
(XXX)	indecipherable passage		speech until the mark +

4. DESCRIPTION OF THE TURN-MAINTAINING

4.1 Focussing

(1) Y: é uma p r o v o c a ç ã o (.) mas isso é só uma das provocaçıes habituais (') (,) porque (riso) a outra
     provocação é dizer que o benfica quando vem às antas nunca se agiganta e está todo metido na área
     (.) portanto há grandes variações sobre isso (.)
   Z: não eu acho que o benfica (XX)
   Y: agora (') **há uma coisa que eu receio** (.) (,) **e agora a sério** (.)
   Z: mm (.)
   Y: depois do resultado em milão (,) depois do que eu li nos jornais e que acredito piamente quanto às
     lavagens de cérebro que o artur jorge fez na na cabine (.) (,) eu receio seriamente que o jogo seja
     muito duro (.) [T1/ 111-122]

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[12] TRP (transitional relevance place) is the moment of a turn which coincides with the end of a sentence and where therefore there is a greater probability for the occurrence of a turn-taking (cf. Sachs/Schegloff/Jefferson, 1974: 702 ff.).

(1) The segmentation of Y's turn is a result of the turn-reclaim activity of the hearer. In its second part we can find a sequence of elements conducting Z's activities towards the focus of action. *«agora»*, a topographic opening signal shows the speaker's will to continue the turn and his intention to introduce a new theme. This signal is reinforced by two pre-fixed announcements. The first one announcing the propositional content of what is going to follow, the second one the modality, i.e. the speaker wants the hearer to prepare himself to receive the message according to the announced modus. Because the announced information is only given in the last utterance it is marked by the repetition of *«eu receio»*. Using this strategy the speaker Y is able not only to maintain the turn, but also to nullify any reclamation of the turn. The second activity of the hearer, the return signal «mm(.)», shows that he has accepted to cooperate with Y, maintaining his role as hearer.

(2) Y: isso (') revela bom senso também (.) (,) revela também (accelerated breathing) já agora (') (,) **deixe-me deitar um bocado de fel cá para fora** (') (,) revela também como o sporting foi um burro em mandá-lo embora na minha opinião (.) + [T1/375-378]

(2) The expression *«deixe-me deitar um bocado de fel cá para fora»* is a metaphorical way of anouncing the modality of the following utterances. It is the same as saying *«now I want to show my anger»*. This announcement is an aside act and it is produced in a different rhythm, that emphasises its specific meaning/function in the sequence. Its end is still marked by the repetition of the verbal form that was produced at its beginning (cf. 4. 2). (3) The following example illustrates the semantic focussing:

(3) Y: e vai daí (-) (,) alguém tinha que ganhar (') (,) eu penso que chegou a altura de pronto (') como acontece em muitos clubes por essa europa fora (.) (,) pousar os pés na terra (.) e construir uma equipa (') quer dizer (.) não sei se **reparou** que o benfica parece uma agência de viagens (?) (..) não é (?) estão sempre a chegar (') sempre a partir (') pré-contractos (') contractos (') empréstimos (') etecetera (-) não pode ser (') **veja** por exemlo a percentagem dos jogadores do futebol clube do porto que vêem dos júniores (.) (,) e **veja** no benfica (') (,) e isso diz tudo (')
     Z: exactamente (.) eu acho que está tudo dito (.) eu acho (-)
                                  [   ]
     Y: é isso que eu chamo uma escola de futebol (.)
     X: mm (-) mm (.)
     Y: e **repare** com um orçamento certamente de metade do do benfica (.) [T1/272-290]

4.2. Repetitions: The situations where repetitions could be found are generally characterised by the occurrence of an obstacle interfering with the production of speech. The origin of these obstacles can be of an internal or of an external nature. The internal obstacles are caused by the speaker himself, due to cognitive activities – which will be treated separately, as one kind of hesitation phenomena (cf. 4.3) – or whenever he introduces new topics, asides, so that he has to interrupt the development of the preceding sequence. The external obstacles are, for instance, hearer activities.

(4) Y: sim (') mas aquilo é um (:) (') o problema é que (.) as dívidas do do benfica são gigantescas (-) toda a gente tem dívidas (') aliás o nosso (h) o próprio país tem dívidas e ninguém as aguenta (.)
                                  [   ]
     Z: ui (')

> Y: mas **as condições** (-)
>
> Z: ainda estamos a pagar as dívidas do salazar (!)
>
> Y: **as condições** de organização sobretudo (.) (,) em que o artur jorge se tem que mover (-) eh a comprar os jogadores todas as semanas (continues) [T3/ 219-231]

(4) In this example the speaker is afraid of losing the turn. At this very moment of conversation Y and Z have opposite opinions, as we can see from Z's ironic comment about the content of Y's utterance. Y knows that such a comment can be followed by a reclamation of the turn. For this reason, Y resorts to a typical strategy which enables him to connect the segmented parts/units, namely a repetition. The continuation of the turn is thus marked by the repetition of the last words of the first turn-unit. (5)) Increasing the voice intensity, the speaker Z avoided the taking of the turn by X:

(5)   Z: eh será dois dois (,) não é(?) será dos dois mas eh por exemplo(-)

> X: porque no fundo a ideia (-)
>
> Z: <u>**mas quando eu estava em lisboa**</u> (-) eu **quando estava em lisboa** (-) senti exactamente (') essas coisas (') quer dizer porque não há muita divulgação do teatro do porto (') **eu quando tava em lisboa** (') conhecia dois ou três actores do porto (') e e e há muitos mais (') no porto (,) não é (?) (continues) [T2/98-107]

4.3. Hesitation phenomena: In order to avoid situations where the other participants can easily take the turn, above all when there are hesitations due to difficulties in giving a structured form to the thoughts or in searching for the best words to say, the speaker has to fulfil the speech chain with verbal or lexical elements, repetitions of words, sentences or parts of sentences. In these situations the occurrence of elements that indicate that a false start is going to be replaced by a new beginning is very frequent.

(6)   Z: (laughs) não eu acho que (**h**) o Y é um benfiquista com um fair-play (') e extremamente lúcido (,) e realmente não é preciso **defender defender** o porto eh (:) com um benfiquista com **este com esta este** fair-play (,) com esta lucidez (.) eh eu acho que está tudo dito (') o porto até agora tem mais equipe que o benfica (-) e nisso é que está a sua força (-) o benfica se calhar tem é melhores jogadores a nível individual mas **isso isso** não faz uma equipe (.) (,) **eh** o benfica tem o jogo é decisivo para o benfica não é para o porto (-) mas atenção (') que muitas vezes de um bom jogo faz-se um mau jogo a seguir (-) e e vice-versa (') portanto (') o benfica de certeza que vai causar grandes problemas ao porto (-) até (') porque as equipas **eh** menores **digamos** (laughs) agigantam-se sempre nas antas (-) e eu espero que o benfica não vá dar imagem (-) [T1/92-105]

(7) Hesitation phenomena are also very frequent after an interruption by the hearer, i.e. at the re-taking of the turn, obviously because at such a moment the speaker's attention is drawn away from what he is saying:

(7)   Z: (continuation) eh(:) há realmente uma grande(:) uma grande descriminação a nível teatral (..)

> Y: a nível (') teatral (.) mm (.)
>
>   [   ]
>
> Z: **eh** entre estas duas cidades (') quer dizer (-)(,) mal ou bem (') tudo o que acontece é em lisboa (') (continues) [T2/63-69]

4.4. Return demand signals [13]: With the return demand signals the speaker wants to know if the hearer is following him and if he disagrees or agrees with him. It does not constitute an «exit technique», i.e. a way of giving the turn (cf. Sachs/Schegloff/Jefferson, 1974: 718), they are Duncan's phatic control signals (Duncan, 1975: 206), responsible for the immediate realisation of back-channel activities. They express a kind of expectation regarding the content of the pronounced utterance. This function is very close to the reinforcement function, as it will be explained at 4.5.

(8)   Y: isso está erra(:)do em termos de política não pode ser assim (') eh sem pÙr em causa o valor do senhor por amor de deus(') **não é** (?)
      X: mm (-) mm (.) [T1/307-311]

(8) In this example we can see how the hearer reacts to a tag-question. The interrogative intonation (ascending + descending) (9) and the ascending intonation followed by a pause (10) can have the same effect as the tag-question:

(9)   Y: ai em (') em todo o caso em relação à questão de (,) porque pronto (') penso sempre automaticamente na questão das **claques** (?)
      Z: mm (-) mm (')
      Y: há uma coisa que me entristece hoje em dia (..) (faster) em relação ao **benfica** (?)+
      X/Z: mm (-) mm (')   [T1/162-171]

(10) Y: (continuation) e de preparar uma equipa assim a prazo (.) (,) dois ou três anos dá bastante **tempo** (')
      X: mm (.)
      Y: o que acnteceu (.) (,) realmente é que no ano passado o porto e o sporting perderam o **campeonato** (')
      X: mm (-) mm (.)
      Y: e vai daí (-) (,) alguém tinha de ganhar (continues) [T1/262-272]

4.5. Reinforcement signals: Reinforcement is a kind of re-focussing activity, very close to the return demand activity (these signals are often even formally identical). Using the reinforcement signals, the speaker expresses his certitude about the given information, in order to nullify any opposite opinion which could be followed by a reclamation of the turn. Tag-questions and other expressions that occur as additional elements to the previous sentence are the most common forms:

(11) Y: aos quarenta e cinco já não fico tão deprimido por perder (') (,) mas continuo a ficar deprimido por um espectáculo de dez tipos metidos na área (-) (,) a chutar para a bancada (') ou nem isso (') nem isso souberam exemplificar (,) **não é** (.) em relação ao campeonato (') para falar com toda a franqueza penso que o campeonato (') (continues) [T1/37-42]

(12) Z: um produto de segunda **não é** (?) um bocado produto de segunda(-) [T2/84-85]

The expression *«não é»* was produced with a descending intonation (11) and with interroga-

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[13] The return demand function has been attributed to the speaker's signals (*Sprechersignalen*, cf. Schwitalla (1976), Burkhardt (1982), Koch/Oesterreicher (1990), in my opinion a non-appropriate designation, because it may cause some confusion with the other speaker signals, namely of turn-taking and of turn-giving.

tive intonation (12). In both cases there was no reaction from the hearer (13) There are also other kinds of expressions which are able to reinforce the content of the preceding utterances:

(13) Z: o pinto da costa é um actor excepcional (') **digo-lhe já** (') e o valentim loureiro é outro (-) [T2/265-266]

4.6. Topographic conversational signals: they are frequent at topic changes (and) inserting repair-strategies.

(14) Y: (continuation) portanto há grandes variações sobre isso (.)
Z: não eu acho que o benfica (XX)
Y: **agora** (') há uma coisa que eu receio (.) e agora a sério (.) (..)
Z: mm (.)
Y: depois do resultado em milão(.) (,) depois do que eu li nos jornais e que acredito piamente (continues) [T1/ 114-123]

(14) This example illustrates a moment of the conversation where there was a risk of losing the turn for the speaker. *«Agora»* marks a new thematic orientation, opposite to the preceding one. It establishes a contra-argumentative relation between the preceding theme and the theme it introduces. This property shows that it is at the same time an interactive contra-argumentative signal. Also the higher voice intensity with which it was produced and its focussing properties help the speaker to maintain the turn.

(15) Y: ai em todo o caso penso sempre na questão de (,) porque **pronto** (') penso sempre automaticamente na questão das claques (?)
Z: mm (-) mm (') [T1/163-167]

(16) Y: e vai daí (-) (,) alguém tinha que ganhar (') (,) eu penso que chegou a altura de **pronto** (') como acontece em muitos clubes por essa europa fora (.) (,) pousar os pés na terra (.) e construir uma equipa (') quer dizer (.) não sei se reparou que o benfica parece uma agência de viagens (?) (..) não é (?) [T1/272-276]

The interpretation of *«pronto»* depends on the intonation. In example (15) the speaker did not find it pertinent to finish the sentence he had begun because he wanted to make an aside. At this moment there is a hesitation, hidden in the repair strategy represented by the word *«pronto»*. This word marks the end of a false start and, due to its ascending intonation, it indicates that something is following and it gives additional information about the indecision of the speaker on the way he should continue his turn. (16) This example illustrates a similar case of a topographic transition signal: due to its semantic content «pronto» closes what has been said; its ascending intonation allows the beginning of something new.

4.7. Interactive conversational signals: A great part of these signals could be found inside the turn, above all within the turn-units following return or reclaim signals. At the same time that they are relevant for the cohesion of the development of the themes, they indicate that the turn is being continued:

(18) Y: o que aconteceu (.) (,) realmente é que no ano passado o porto e o sporting perderam o campeonato (')

X: mm (.)

Y: e **vai daí** (-) (,) alguém tinha de ganhar (') (,) eu penso que chegou a altura de pronto (') como acontece em muitos clubes por essa europa fora (continuation) [T1/265-272]

(19) Y: à hora a que foi é que já não é muito própria de um jogador de futebol (') mas pronto (') mas deu-nos esse desbarato (.) **de qualquer modo** o paulo pereira (-) pois o paulo pereira era um jogador que o artur jorge conheceu bem porque foi treinado por ele aqui nas antas e é porque vê nele (') (..) possibilidades para poder integrar (continues) [T3/81-86]

5. SUMMARY

The present classification of conversational signals gives account for their capacity of functioning at the same time on different levels of conversation, namely on the level of the relations between speaker and hearer(s), on the level of the development of the theme, on the articulatory level between turns and parts of turns and on the emotive level. The distinction between signals produced by the speaker and signals produced by the hearer is indispensable for the interpretation of every kind of conversational signal. This could be shown through the analysis of the turn-maintaining signals, one kind of turn-taking signals. It was observed that turn-maintaining signals appear often with other conversational functions on other levels of conversation and that formally identical turn-maintaining signals can show different meanings on the same level of conversation.

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