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Home position

Harvey Sacks and Emanuel A. Schegloff

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This paper describes a possible formal organizational device that serves to bound episodes of body movement such as gestures, fidgets, instrumental moves and the like. It involves a spate of movement — whether a single move or a series of moves — being completed by returning the moving body part to the position from which it departed at the outset. A series of specimens are examined which display this organizational device across a number of dimensions of variation — in the body part being moved, the characteristics of the mover, the amplitude of the move, etc., underscoring the formality and adaptability of the device.



The electronic edition of this article includes audio-visual data.

Keywords: body movement, gesture, formal organization

Editors' note

The use of film recordings in the micro-analysis of naturally-occurring interaction with concomitant observations of structure in bodily action was pioneered in large part by Gregory Bateson and Ray Birdwhistell (see Leeds-Hurwitz, 1987 and Kendon, 1990 for historical accounts). However, towards the end of the nineteen sixties video-tape had become available and cheap enough for researchers to take advantage of it. Most important, *portable* video became possible which allowed researchers to make recordings in field situations of all kinds. This development intersected with Conversation Analysis most directly in 1973, apparently as a result of an encounter between Harvey Sacks and Emanuel Schegloff with Charles and Marjorie (Candy) Goodwin at the Linguistics Institute held that summer in Ann Arbor, Michigan. The Goodwins, in Philadelphia, beginning in 1970, together with Gail Jefferson and under the