

OLD WINE IN NEW BOTTLES

The case of the adjacency-pair framework revisited

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Abstract – This study reports on the preliminary stages of a project concerned with presenting a systematic framework for annotating and analysing film dialogue which blends corpus annotation with adjacency pair theory (Schegloff, Sacks 1973). The adjacency pair model, which consists of closed sets of pairs, is applied to a searchable online corpus in which all the episodes of the U.S. medical drama *House M.D.* are transcribed and divided into scenes, the basic search unit. The article describes the modifications and adjustments to the original adjacency-pair model in order to accommodate the highly specialized dialogue of medical settings not envisaged by Schegloff and Sacks (1973) and the different interpersonal relationships between the characters, as well as the complex intersemiotic interactions characterizing TV film series.

Keywords: adjacency pairs; corpus annotation at discourse level; TV drama discourse.

1. Introduction

When Newton stated in 1675 “If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulders of Giants” he wanted to highlight the fact that his discoveries were built on discoveries previously made by researchers, such as Kepler, and that the need to revisit, reconsider and adapt theoretical frameworks is an essential step in promoting advances in scientific research. The present article attempts to follow suit drawing on research into conversation analysis carried out some fifty years ago by Sacks and Schegloff (Schegloff 1968, 1980; Schegloff, Sacks 1973; Sacks *et al.* 1974) and in particular revisiting their adjacency-pair framework, considered by many as a limiting framework for the analysis of authentic conversation (e.g. Sinclair, Coulthard 1975; Eggins, Slade [1997] 2006). The research question addressed is whether the model, with adaptations and integrations, can be successfully applied to the scripted discourse of TV dramas, a kind of discourse for which this model was not conceived but which in the years since the model was first drawn up has become an object of considerable academic research and discussion (Taylor 1999; Rossi 2003;

Pavesi 2005; Quaglio 2009), at the very least on a par with the studies of spontaneous oral discourse that dominated the development of discourse models half a century ago (Labov, Waletzky [1967] 1997; Sinclair, Coulthard 1975; Burton 1978; Coulthard, Brazil 1979). Put another way, the article asks whether the affordances of the digital age, which potentially include the application of corpus-based approaches to digitalized TV dramas, are such as to transcend the model's perceived shortcomings by foregrounding and advocating its hidden potentialities.

The preliminary research presented in this article focuses on the scripted discourse of the U.S. medical drama *House M.D.* and is part of the *MWSWeb House Corpus* project (<http://mws.itd.cnr.it>), a searchable online corpus in which all the 177 episodes of the U.S. medical drama *House M.D.* are transcribed and divided into scenes, the basic search unit. In particular, this strand of investigation of the project will consider the following research questions:

1. how far can the adjacency-pair framework be applied to *House M.D.* scene closures?
2. how relevant is the concept of a multimodal adjacency pair in which the first part is enacted linguistically and the second part by a non-linguistic response (e.g. silence or a specific body movement) and viceversa?

The article is arranged as follows: *Section 2* reviews the literature on the adjacency-pair model and its application to authentic and scripted discourse. *Section 3* provides a description of how the adjacency-pair model can be turned into a search tool and of what modifications and adjustments are needed in the furtherance of this goal. *Section 4* discusses the hurdles of the *MWSWeb House Corpus* project regarding the analysis of adjacency pairs. Finally, *Section 5* draws some conclusions and possible future developments.

2. Literature review

One of the basic tenets of Conversation Analysis (henceforth CA), and an “analytical innovation” (Goodwin, Heritage 1990, p. 287) for that time, is the concept of interactional sequence. This led Schegloff and Sacks (1973) to develop the concept of adjacency pair, which was defined as the basic unit of conversational exchange. The adjacency pair consists of two adjacent utterances produced by different speakers and functionally related to each other as the second utterance is determined by the first utterance. For Schegloff and Sacks, adjacency pairs typically included *question/answer*, *greeting/greeting*, *complaint/denial*, *offer/accept*, *request/grant*, *compliment/response*, *challenge/rejection*, and *instruct/receipt*. There were, they argued, pairs such as *question/answer*, *greeting/greeting* and *compliment/response* which typically expect just one response. On the contrary, other

sequences allowed the second speaker in conversation to choose from two options, that they described as a preferred one and a dispreferred one. A case in point is the first-pair part *offer*. The preferred second-pair part is *accept*, while the dispreferred is *refusal*. The latter is considered more face-threatening because it requires the speaker to draw on mitigating strategies to explain the reason for the refusal and ensure the cooperative principle in conversation (Grice 1975).

The adjacency-pair model is based on the property of “conditional relevance” (Schegloff 1972) whereby the second-pair part is conditioned by the first-pair part as is the case of the *question/answer* sequence. However, as Schegloff (1972) observed, there are cases where a question is not followed by an answer, but by another question, yet the answer is not seen as absent. Schegloff called these sequences “‘insertion sequence’ or ‘inserted sequences,’ because between an initial question and its answer there is inserted another question-answer sequence” (Schegloff 1972, p. 78). As an example Schegloff (1972, p. 78) provides the following sequence:

A: Are you coming tonight?

B: Can I bring a guest?

A: Sure.

B: I’ll be there.

where the *question/answer* sequence *Can I bring a guest?/Sure* is an insertion sequence.

For many years, CA was applied only to the analysis of spontaneous conversation, or talk-in-interaction in CA’s terms. However, Goodwin and Heritage (1990, p. 289) observe that “ordinary conversation is the point of departure for more specialized communicative contexts (e.g. the legal process, the educational system, the medical encounter), which may be analysed as embodying systematic variations from conversational procedures”. Indeed, the adjacency-pair framework has been applied not only to everyday conversations, but also to various kinds of institutional encounters including medical consultations (West 1983; Frankel 1990), law courts (Atkinson, Drew 1979), news interviews (Heritage 1985; Heritage, Greatbatch 1991; Greatbatch 1988), classroom lessons (McHoul 1978; Mehan 1985), and psychotherapeutic interactions (Peräkylä *et al.* 2008).

However, research has also demonstrated the limit of the adjacency-pair framework by pointing out that the majority of conversational exchanges consist of more than two utterances. For example, Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) observed that the basic unit of analysis of classroom discourse is a three-part exchange consisting of the following three moves: 1) Initiation; 2) Response; and 3) Feedback. The Initiation is spoken by the teacher and followed by the student’s Response; finally, the student’s Response is followed by the teacher’s Feedback, which aims to indicate whether the student’s Response is right or wrong. This formula was then revised by Coulthard and

Brazil (1979) who proposed the following exchange structure, consisting of from a minimum of two moves up to a maximum of six moves: 1) Initiation; 2) (Response); 3) (Initiation); 4) Response; 5) (Feedback); and 6) (Feedback).¹ Similarly, although in passing, Goffmann (1976) noted the unsatisfactoriness of the adjacency-pair framework:

[a] response will on occasion leave matters in a ritually unsatisfactory state, and a turn by the initial speaker will be required, encouraged, or at least allowed, resulting in a three-part interchange; or chains of adjacency pairs will occur (albeit typically with one, two, or three such couplets), the chain itself having a unitary, bounded character. (Goffman 1976, p. 272)

The result has been that other models have taken over. An example is Eggins and Slade's ([1997] 2006) model based on Halliday's (e.g. 1973, 1978) theory of language.

Although the adjacency-pair framework appears to have had its limitations in the description of authentic interactions, conversely, the framework would appear to have had some success with scripted texts such as dramas, as is the case of the TV drama *House M.D.* considered in this article. In this regard, Coulthard ([1977] 1985) states that “[d]rama texts, being scripted for the performing of pseudo-conversations, can be successfully approached with techniques originally developed to analyse real conversation” (Coulthard [1977] 1985, p. 182). Thus, over the years, while studies relating to the model's application to spontaneous oral discourse in English appear to have dwindled, on the contrary studies that apply the model to scripted discourse appear to have slowly gained ground (see Table 1 for a list of studies on scripted discourse analysed using CA) in spite of criticisms of the use of CA as a tool to investigate non-spontaneous interactions (Emmison 1993; Schegloff 1988).

Study	Genre	Aspect investigated
Coulthard [1977] 1985	<i>Othello</i>	question/answer sequence
Herman 1998	plays by Shakespeare, Pinter, Osborne, Beckett, and Shaw	systematics of turn-taking
Piazza 1999	plays by Haye, Norman, Shepard and Pinter	conversational repairs
Piazza 2006	Italian melodrama	confrontational talk
Stokoe 2008	TV series <i>Friends</i>	adjacency pairs
Chepinchikj, Thomposon 2016	three Woody Allen films	adjacency pairs

Table 1
Some studies on scripted discourse using CA.

Using CA, Coulthard ([1977] 1985) analyses the *question/answer* sequence in Shakespeare's *Othello* and observes that the tragedy is brought about by Iago's

¹ The moves in round brackets are optional.

avoidance of answering Othello's questions about Cassio. In so doing, Iago arouses suspicion of his wife's adultery with Cassio as it suggests to Othello that Iago is concealing something.

Herman (1998) explores the systematics of turn-taking in dramatic discourse, particularly Shakespeare's, Pinter's, Osborne's, Beckett's, and Shaw's, and observes that in their plays dramatists make use of varied sequencing options (e.g. adjacency pairs, side sequences, remedial sequences) and pattering which contribute to interaction management and the creation of situations. She states that:

various interactive paths are possible. The normative rules are those that maximize on co-operation and harmony in talk, but the rules can be manipulated to create other situations – of conflict, isolation, separation – since these are also potential realities of inter-personal communication and talk. The paths taken and the effects achieved are also owing to the strategic use of the system. The variety and creativity of the uses of the turn-taking system are legion, since each segment in a play creates its own specificities of situation and character through the enacted patterns of participants' talk. (Herman 1998, p. 162)

Work on dramatic discourse using CA has been carried out by Piazza (1999), as well. In her study, she analyses the mechanisms for conversational repairs in four modern plays (Haye's *Skirmishes*, Norman's *'Night, Mother*, Shepard's *Fool for Love*, and Pinter's *The Caretaker*). Her study shows that, when compared to real-life exchanges, dramatic discourse makes use of deviant discourse procedures; the use of ordinary communicative strategies, on the other hand, takes place only for special dramatic purposes.

Piazza (2006) also analyses confrontational talk, defined as a break in conversational talk, in a corpus of Italian films belonging to the melodrama genre, namely narratives characterized by dramatic passion. In particular, she focuses on the *question/answer* adjacency pair and the strategies used in the answer slot to deal with aggressive questions or questions perceived as aggressive. Piazza (2006) observes that the following three strategies are used: 1) reply for an answer, i.e. the answer does not satisfy the original question; 2) silence as an answer, i.e. the answer consists of a silence; and 3) questions as replies, i.e. the answer is a new question.

CA has also been applied to the language of sitcoms and films as demonstrated by the studies by Stokoe (2008) and Chepinchikj and Thomposon (2016). Stokoe (2008) uses CA to examine the production of humour in the American sitcom *Friends* and observes that the breaching of conversational "rules", particularly the preference organization in adjacency pairs, and interruptions in the structure of turn-taking are used on purpose to elicit laughter from the TV audience. Chepinchikj and Thompson (2016) apply CA to segments taken from three Woody Allen films (*Husbands and Wives*, *Melinda and Melinda*, and *You will Meet a Tall Dark Stranger*). In some

scenes, they observe a lack of adjacency pairs which reveals a disconnection between the characters portrayed; on the other hand, when present, the adjacency pairs tend to completely lack the second-pair part in *question/answer* and *request/answer* sequences, or this is delayed, i.e. the second-pair part does not immediately follow the first-pair part but occurs later in the dialogue. They conclude that “[t]hese marked types of adjacency pairs are used as an interactional device to evade and deflect the course of conversation to the benefit of the character who is performing that action” (Chepinchikj, Thompson 2016, p. 48).

What emerges from these studies is a skilful use of some of the features of conversational exchanges with a recurrent deviation from the conversational norms of turn-taking. It can be thus expected that a similar pattern will be found in *House M.D.*, too. In passing, we may recall that Dr. House, the main character of the series, is a rather special doctor who accepts only puzzling cases and does whatever it takes to solve them, including flouting hospital rules and opting for ethically-questionable procedures. For this reason, he frequently comes into conflict not only with his boss, Dr. Lisa Cuddy, the hospital administrator and Dean of Medicine, but also with his good friend, Dr. James Wilson, and his team.

3. Analysis hypothesis and sampling

3.1. Adjacency pairs as a search tool

To date, to the author’s knowledge, the long-standing tradition of the adjacency-pair framework’s application to scripted discourse has not included the possibility of using the model as a way of searching through corpora. Traditionally, corpus studies are based on word or collocation patterns as well as multi-word units as demonstrated by the extensive literature triggered by Sinclair’s (1991) seminal work *Corpus, Concordance, Collocation*. As regards research into spoken corpora, corpus searching based on larger units, such as complete utterances, has rarely been taken into account, as there would probably only be one or two examples, or no examples of patterned use. One exception is the attempt to explore larger units made by Adolphs (2008) who uses a corpus-based approach to analyse the pragmatic function of utterances in the Cambridge and Nottingham Corpus of Discourse in English (CANCODE) (McCarthy 1998). Adolphs points out the difficulty of combining a corpus-based approach to analyse language functions as “the pragmatic approach starts from a functional perspective, while the corpus approach starts from a lexicogrammatical perspective” (Adolphs 2008, p. 44). In this regard, Swales states:

starting with a lexical item [...] is relatively straightforward, at least initially, because one can be fairly sure of capturing all the tokens [...]. Starting with a functional category, in contrast, means searching the grammatical and pragmatic literature as well as racking one's brain in order to come up with a list of possible realizations. (Swales in Adolphs 2008, p. 9)

Swales' statement is demonstrated by Adolphs with some examples of the lexicogrammatical realizations of the *suggest* function. However, Adolphs also shows that the concordance lines obtained need to be filtered to eliminate the "undesired" lines, i.e. those concordance lines where the lexicogrammatical realization does not realize the function under analysis. A case in point is the expression *why don't you* which, besides being predominantly used to put forward a suggestion, is also used with the meaning *for what reason*.

In the light of Adolphs' (2008) study and previous research on functional concordancing (Cocchetta 2008, 2011), in this article it is argued that the abstract nature of the adjacency-pair model, on the other hand, could be the basis for a search model that overcomes the production of *one-offs*, i.e. just one or two examples, as well as the difficulties described by Adolphs (2008). Besides, as recalled above in *Section 2*, the literature on adjacency pairs demonstrates that patterns of use do emerge, for example, where a question is followed by a question rather than an answer, while when it comes to dramatic discourse, the model would point out patterns of use that deviate from what typically occurs in authentic discourse. As a consequence, it would be useful to have the possibility of searching an entire corpus to discover the nature and incidence of such pairs. For instance, it may be useful to see whether the follow-up question is conflictual in nature, or designed to seek clarification, or merely requiring information, possibly misheard, to be repeated.

However, such an undertaking is time-consuming so that strategies need to be developed to make the task more manageable. A pilot study is what is called for and what is reproduced in this article *vis-à-vis* the *House Corpus*. In particular, the study's final aim is creating an adjacency-pair search interface to be integrated in the *MWSWeb House Corpus* project (<http://mws.itd.cnr.it>). The project makes the *House Corpus* available online along with the possibility of accessing each scene individually (Baldry, in press; Taibi *et al.*, in press).

3.2 Adjacency pairs in the House Corpus

A first step in the construction of an adjacency-pair search interface is manual analysis that identifies the occurrence of adjacency pairs in *House M.D.* scene closures. In this preliminary stage of the project, it was decided to focus on scene closures for two reasons: one practical and one theoretically grounded. From a practical point of view, the detection of the last two lines of a scene is relatively simple thanks to the pre-existing scene division in the corpus (see Baldry 2016) that establishes the start and the end of a scene. From a theoretical point of view,

it can be argued that a scene in a film script corresponds to what Schegloff and Sacks (1973, p. 289) refer to as “the unit ‘a single conversation.’” Some terminological explanations are in order. In particular we need to define what a *scene* and a *single conversation* are.

McKee (1997, p. 21) states that the goal of a movie or TV series scriptwriter is “a good story *well told*” (italics in the original). The story has a structure consisting of the following units, arranged in ascending order of size (smaller to larger): *beat*, *scene*, *sequence*, and *act*. What is of interest for the present study is the scene, also known as story event. A scene is defined as “a meaningful change in the life situation of a character that is expressed and experienced in terms of a value” (McKee 1997, p. 33). By value, McKee means “the universal qualities of human experience that may shift from positive to negative, or negative to positive, from one moment to the next” (McKee 1997, p. 34). Examples of positive/negative values are love/hate, strength/weakness, and courage/cowardice. In other words, a scene is a turning point in the plot, “a story in miniature” (McKee 1997, p. 233).

In conversation analysis, a single conversation is a unit of analysis defined as a conversation activity where one speaker speaks at a time and speaker change recurs. As a result, a single conversation consists of a sequence of turns. Besides, it is structurally organized in segments such as openings, middles and closings.

Schegloff and Sacks (1973) paid particular attention to the problem of what they called the closings of conversations, specifically to how a conversation is brought to a close. They pointed out that adjacency pairs are typically used in terminal exchanges (i.e. the ending sequences of ‘a single conversation’). It can be thus concluded that it is highly probable to find adjacency pairs at the end of the scenes. This hypothesis is supported by Herman’s (1998) work on dramatic discourse. In particular, she observes that adjacency pairs “permit the closure of interactive business with high economy” (Herman 1998, p. 124).

Examples 1 and 2 support the hypothesis that the penultimate line often contains the first-pair part of the adjacency pair while the last contains the second-pair part. In the scene shown in Example 1, the main characters are Jonah, a four-year-old patient, his mother, Melinda, and Dr. Foreman and in the scene closure we can see the *question/answer* adjacency pair.

[Jonah starts giggling]
 Melinda: Does the pill tickle, sweetie?
 Foreman: He can’t feel it. What’s funny, your brother?
 [Foreman looks into Jonah’s eyes with his light. Jonah continues to laugh]
 Melinda: What’s happening?
 Foreman: I don’t know.

Example 1

Scene closure containing a *question/answer* adjacency pair (from *House M.D.*, S5 E08).

In Example 2, Dr. Chase instructs Stewart, the patient, to count down from ten and he complies. This is an example of the *instruct/receipt* adjacency pair. In passing, we may recall that in the adjacency-pair model the term *receipt* means compliance.

Stewart: (grabbing Cameron's hand) I know I'm a pain in the ass. I know it would have been easy just to walk away, but... You're a good person.
 [Cameron looks like she is having doubts about the deception. Stewart obviously trusts her]
 [Chase administers the anesthesia]
 Chase: Count down from 10.
 Stewart: 10, 9, 8...
 [Foreman and Kutner come in and they all prepare to move Stewart to the hospital]

Example 2

Scene closure containing an *instruct/receipt* adjacency pair (from *House M.D.*, S5 E07).

Similar to face-to-face interactions, TV series rely on the interplay of different semiotic resources, including action. Thus, it can be assumed that one pair in the sequence can be realized non-linguistically with action. A case in point is Example 3.

Kutner: If we don't give him a new kidney, he's dead in a week. We have to transplant.
 House: When your remote has a dead battery, you don't replace it with another dead battery. Whatever's killing the dad's kidneys is gonna kill the kid's too.
 Taub: It is possible the sleep issues aren't medically related. Maybe they're both insomniacs due to the turnpike noise. Maybe they both drink too much coffee, maybe –
 Thirteen: (approaching) House is right.
 Taub: How do you know?
 Thirteen: Because the daughter's sweating blood. If they have the same thing, it means there has to be a common cause. Which means it has to be a toxin, infection, or genetic. And since we've ruled out infections and toxins –
 Kutner: It narrows it down to any one of a dozen genetic disorders, each of which takes more than a week to run.
 House: Call Foreman. Get to work.
 [The team leave]

Example 3

Scene closure containing an *instruct/receipt* adjacency pair (from *House M.D.*, S5 E06).

In this example, the first-pair part of the adjacency pair is realized linguistically, that is, “Call Foreman. Get to work”, while the second-pair part is realized non-linguistically: House's diagnostic team (Kutner, Taub and Thirteen) leave in order to comply with and carry out their boss's instruction. Here, we do not see the outcome, but it is highly probable that the team will comply because of the interpersonal relations between themselves and House, particularly the professional hierarchy that characterizes this relation (House is

the boss, the team are the subordinates in the pecking order – indeed they are known affectionately by fans as House’s ducklings).

In this respect, a preliminary analysis of Season 5 reveals a recurrent pattern, that is, House’s instructions to his team tend to be linguistic while the compliance is non-linguistic. In other words, as the Series’ logic proverbially dictates, House always gets the last word. Indeed, in this case and many others, the first-pair part of the adjacency pair is not realized in the penultimate line, as previously hypothesized, but in the last line. Thus, we can find sequences where the last line contains the first-pair part of the adjacency pair, while the second-pair part is realized visually in the same scene, or in a following one, with a gesture or other actions.

We can thus posit that in the *House Corpus* two types of adjacency pair exist: Adjacency Pair Type 1, where the first-pair part and the second-pair part of the adjacency pair are respectively realized in the penultimate and last lines of the scene script, and Adjacency Pair Type 2, where the first-pair part is realized just in the last line of the scene script and the second-pair part in a “missing line”.

3.3. Incorporating the adjacency-pair model into the House Corpus

On the basis of the above pilot study, a provisional model has been incorporated into the *House Corpus* to annotate each scene for Adjacency Pair Type 1 and Adjacency Pair Type 2. This is illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1 shows that the scene under analysis is provided with the transcript and some annotation options which include: 1) Location type (e.g. Hospital or Elsewhere); 2) Event type (e.g. Case Discussion, Public or Private); and 3) Interaction type. What is of interest for this study is the last category. The drop-down menu next to Interaction type enables the annotator to choose from Adjacency Pair Type 1 and Adjacency Pair Type 2. If Adjacency Pair Type 1 is selected (see Figure 2), the annotator is provided with two drop-down menus, one for each line in the dialogue, that enable them to annotate the penultimate line and the last line for the first-pair-part options (e.g. greeting, question, and instruct) and the second-pair-part options (e.g. greeting, answer, and receipt) respectively.

Episode 7 - Scene 8

<< Prev Episode < Prev Scene Next Scene > Next Episode >>

Stewart: (grabbing Cameron's hand) I know I'm a pain in the ass. I know it would have been easy just to walk away, but... You're a good person.
 [Cameron looks like she is having doubts about the deception. Stewart obviously trusts her]
 [Chase administers the anesthesia]
 Chase: Count down from 10.
 Stewart: 10, 9, 8...
 [Foreman and Kutner come in and they all prepare to move Stewart to the hospital]

Location type: ELSEWHERE Hospital Elsewhere Undecided Other Categories

Event type (Scene/Action): Case Discussion Public Private Undecided Other Categories

Interaction type:

Penultimate line: Type 1

Last line in dialogue:

Figure 1
Interface for the annotation of the *House Corpus*.

Episode 7 - Scene 8

<< Prev Episode < Prev Scene Next Scene > Next Episode >>

Stewart: (grabbing Cameron's hand) I know I'm a pain in the ass. I know it would have been easy just to walk away, but... You're a good person.
 [Cameron looks like she is having doubts about the deception. Stewart obviously trusts her]
 [Chase administers the anesthesia]
 Chase: Count down from 10.
 Stewart: 10, 9, 8...
 [Foreman and Kutner come in and they all prepare to move Stewart to the hospital]

Location type: Hospital Elsewhere Undecided Other Categories

Event type (Scene/Action): Case Discussion Public Private Undecided Other Categories

Interaction type:

Penultimate line:

Last line in dialogue:

Figure 2
Interface for the annotation of Adjacency Pair Type 1 in the *House Corpus*.

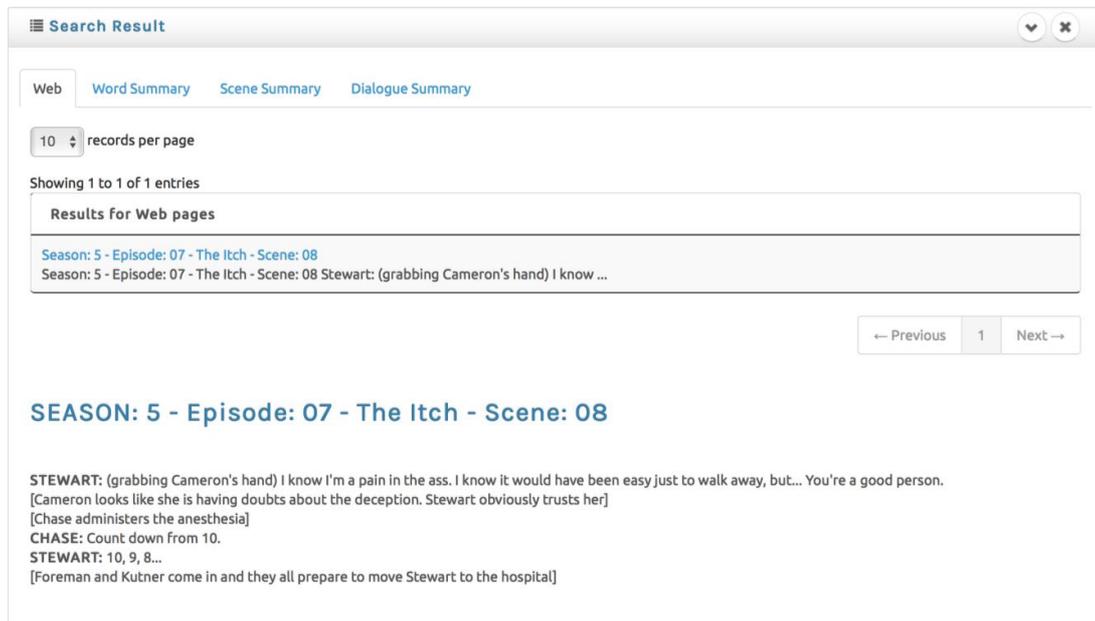


Figure 4
Search result for Adjacency Pair Type 2 in the *House Corpus*.

4. Discussion

Although in recent years annotation at discourse level has made some progress as shown by Archer *et al.* (2008) *vis-à-vis* pragmatic annotation, it is still a high-risk business due to the apparent shortage of annotation tools. The pilot study sketched above has considered the adjacency-pair framework (Schegloff, Sacks 1973) and has shown that the model can be incorporated into an interface to annotate scripted discourse, specifically that of the TV series *House M.D.*, and search for the various types of adjacency pairs, thus making adjacency pair searching a viable proposition, one capable of producing useful discourse patterns as the *instruct/repair* adjacency pair shown in Example 3 above where the *instruct* part, addressed to House's team, is linguistically realized by House himself while the *repair* part is realized non-linguistically by his team who leave, an indication of their acceptance. In addition, in the light of the multimodal nature of the TV series, the study has pointed out the need to modify and adjust the framework in order to ensure that the non-linguistic realizations of one of the two pair parts can be easily and successfully annotated.

There are, of course, many hurdles to be overcome. First, only scene closures are currently envisaged. However, there is a need to find ways to extend the model to other parts of the scenes to better understand the mechanisms for interaction among the various characters and shed some light on their interpersonal relations. In this regard, we can recall Goodwin and Heritage's observation that "CA's focus on conversation between

acquaintances, friends, and siblings offers an opportunity to determine what is distinctive about interactions involving asymmetries as status, gender, and ethnicity” (Goodwin, Heritage 1990, p. 289). One of these ways includes the use of semi-automatic annotation. For example, one of the functionalities under discussion is the automatic identification of question types owing to the presence of the “?” character. This facilitates and speeds up annotation of the *question/question* adjacency pair discussed above.

Second, the examples provided in *Section 3.3* have illustrated the fact that when analysing the scene closures of *House M.D.* two adjacency pair types need to be posited. Besides what was defined as Adjacency Pair Type 1, where the first-pair part and the second-pair part of the adjacency pair are respectively realized in the penultimate and last lines in dialogue, an Adjacency Pair Type 2 also needs to be included, where the first-pair part is in the last line and the second-pair part is in a missing line. There is, however, some evidence to suggest the predictability of these types, for example, in relation to non-verbal responses in final adjacency pairs in Season 5 where a recurrent plotline is House’s hostile relationship with his new recruits. Such fine-grained analysis goes beyond the scope of this first-stage “feasibility” report but suggests the need for more exhaustive accounts of this and other TV series as well as further research into corpus-based approaches to discourse studies as a way of simulating the alternative possibilities and strategies available to interactants at specific points in the construction of discourse, of which closure, however significant, is just *one* aspect.

5. Conclusions

The present article has considered the adjacency-pair model developed by Schegloff and Sacks (1973) from different perspectives. First of all, it has reviewed some of the literature on the adjacency pair and its applications to the analysis of authentic conversations (or talk-in-interactions in CA’s terms) as well as institutional encounters and to scripted discourse, particularly plays, television series and movies. The article has also pointed out the lack of corpus-based studies where the model has been applied. In the case of the studies on scripted discourse mentioned above, it can be argued that the availability of corpus tools and techniques for CA analysis might well have facilitated the researcher’s work. Secondly, the article has described the application of the adjacency pair model to the American TV drama *House M.D.* and demonstrated the need to modify and adjust the model in order to accommodate the highly specialized dialogue of medical settings not envisaged by Schegloff and Sacks (1973) and the different interpersonal relationships between the characters, as well as the complex intersemiotic interactions characterizing TV film series. In so doing, the study has shown the possibility of applying a model

based on adjacency pairs to corpus studies thus going beyond the word level which, traditionally, has received much attention in the development of annotating techniques (e.g. POS tagging, lemmatization, semantic annotation). Further steps in the project, some of them briefly suggested above, will hopefully allow greater insights to be made that will be reported in subsequent publications.

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