

# Research into Communication between Doctors and Patients: Applying Conversation Analysis

HKU Constituent Theme-  
*Languages, Media & Communication:*  
*Language in Education & Assessment Seminar Series*

Speaker

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**LG06, Hui Oi Chow Science Building, HKU**

## Abstract

Conversation Analysis (CA) has developed over the past 40 years as an interdisciplinary field with a profound impact in linguistics, sociology and communications. 'CA' is in some respects misleading – it is a perspective and method applicable to language use in any kind of interaction. Recent research using the methods of CA to investigate doctor-patient interaction has made real breakthroughs in our understanding of the communicative dynamics of medical consultations. The research findings, by groups in the US, Finland as well as the UK, reveal much about how some of the core stages in the primary care consultation are managed (for instance how patients present their medical condition to doctors, how doctors manage the examination of the patient and then give their diagnoses). These research findings have significant implications for medical decision-making, patient resistance and concordance with treatment recommendations etc. – implications which in some cases have applications for medical practice and training. I'll review how this area of research has developed out of CA studies of language use in interaction, what seem to be the advances achieved through this area of 'applied' CA research, and also what are some of the limitations in the application of CA to investigating medical interactions.

**Paul Drew** is Professor of Sociology at the University of York, UK. His research in Conversation Analysis focuses on the underlying practices that make communication and understanding possible in all forms of interaction; and includes published work on repair in conversation, figurative expressions and the organization of topic, exaggerating and, most recently, activities that are particularly associated with affiliation/disaffiliation (requesting, offering and complaining). He has applied the methods of CA to communication in more specialized institutional settings, especially legal and, more recently, medical interactions.

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This seminar is co-organized by Department of Linguistics, School of Humanities;  
School of English; and the Faculty of Education, HKU.

**All are Welcome. Enquiries: [dmklam06@hkucc.hku.hk](mailto:dmklam06@hkucc.hku.hk)**