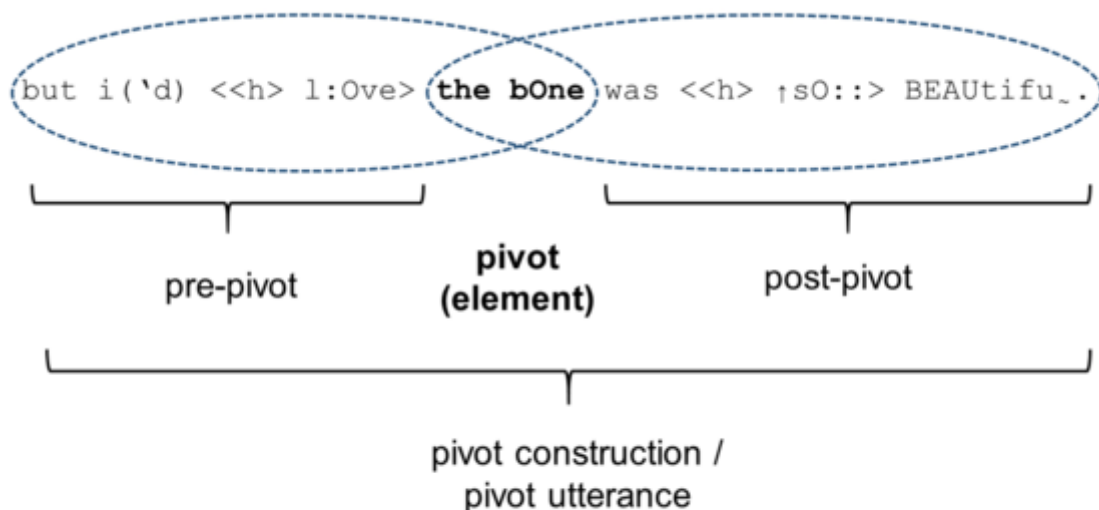


Pivot

Encyclopedia of Terminology for CA and IL: Pivot	
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The term **pivot** denotes an element of talk that can be understood to belong to two larger units of talk simultaneously, thereby joining them together and acting as a transitional link between them (Schegloff 1979: 275-276). Most commonly, the term is used to refer to lexico-syntactic elements that can be interpreted as ending one **turn-constructive unit (TCU)** while at the same time launching a next, as illustrated in the following figure:



Example taken from NB:IV:3:R:3 (see also Walker 2007: 2219)
Transcription follows GAT 2 conventions for English (Couper-Kuhlen/Barth-Weingarten 2011)

Figure 1: Pivot Construction (Barth-Weingarten, et al. 2021)

Here, "the bone" is deployed as a pivot (or pivot element): It is used to complete a first TCU ("but I'd love the bone") while at the same time serving as the beginning for a second/next TCU ("the bone was so beautiful"). This yields an utterance consisting of two parts (see the dashed circles) which are joined together through a shared lexico-syntactic constituent. The resulting utterances are typically referred to as pivot constructions or pivot utterances (although sometimes the term 'pivot' is used metonymically to refer to the resulting utterance(s) as a whole). Pivot constructions and their interactional uses have been studied in a range of different languages (e.g., Betz 2008, 2013; Pekarek Doehler & Horlacher 2013; Hennoste 2013; Horlacher & Pekarek Doehler 2014; Lindström 2013; Norén 2013; Scheutz 2005; Walker 2007; see Norén & Linell 2013 for an overview).

As a turn-constructive practice pivoting enables speakers to circumvent an impending or projected **transition-relevance place (TRP)** and to extend turns past a point of possible TCU completion. Unlike other turn-constructive methods that can be employed to this end, such as **rush-throughs** (Schegloff 1982; Walker 2010) or **abrupt-joins** (Local & Walker 2004), pivots

do not work to compress the transition space (Schegloff 2005) but to obscure it. In addition, pivoting has also been shown to be used to smooth over **self-repair** (e.g., Schegloff 1979; Betz 2008; Barth-Weingarten et al., frthc.), to manage **overlap** as well as **topic** transitions (e.g., Betz 2008), or to do stance work (e.g., to shift framings or perspectives; e.g., Norén 2013).

In the example depicted in the figure above, syntax alone enforces a pivot interpretation for the focal utterance, because "the bone" is syntactically an obligatory element in both of the conjoined parts. This need not be the case, however (see, e.g., Walker 2007: 2237; Scheutz 2005 for a discussion of syntactic variability in English and German pivot constructions), and some scholars have argued that even syntactically fully optional items can be deployed as turn-constructive pivots (see **modular pivots**; Clayman & Raymond 2015). Moreover, research on typologically different languages like Korean or Japanese (both agglutinative languages with predicate-final SOV structure) suggests that these languages offer their speakers distinct possibilities for constructing pivot turns (Tanaka 2001; Ju 2011), and these appear to blur the conceptual boundaries between pivoting and other turn extensional practices like **incrementing** (on which, see Auer 2006, 2007; Couper-Kuhlen & Ono 2007; Ford, et al. 2002; Schegloff 2016 [2000]; see also Linell 2013; Norén & Linell 2013; Norén 2007; Betz 2008 on possible relationships between pivoting and incrementing).

The general association between pivoting and **turn-holding** that has been observed in most other languages is underpinned and facilitated by the use of certain prosodic-phonetic resources which serve to integrate the different parts of the pivot construction. Pivot utterances are generally said to be smoothly through-produced, with its parts being prosodic-phonetically fitted to each other so that no disjunctions are audible at the critical junctures between pre-pivot and pivot or between pivot and post-pivot, respectively (see esp. Walker 2007 for English; but cf. Norén & Linell 2013 and their notion of 'pivot-like constructions', see also below). It has recently been suggested, though, that pivot constructions may exhibit some variability and gradience with regard to how tightly they are integrated prosodic-phonetically, and that this may not only matter for whether a turn is potentially hearable as a pivot utterance or not (especially if the pivot element is syntactically optional in one or both parts of the pivot construction), but also for how the actions implemented through it relate to each other (Barth-Weingarten, et al. 2021).

It bears mention that, as a method of turn-construction, pivoting need not involve lexico-syntactic constituents. It can also operate on the level of sounds, as is illustrated in the following example, where the [dʒ] sound in "exagg(erate)" is used to pivot to "just".

(Adapted from Schegloff 1979: 275)

A has had a claim of hers called an exaggeration.

A: DON'T SAY that I'm exa[dʒ]ust say I'm a liar.

Beyond the level of turn-construction, the concept of pivots has also been used to describe similar phenomena on the level of topic organization and sequence construction, i.e. to refer to turns/TCUs that serve as transitional devices between **topics**, **sequences** or **activities** and create topical or sequential junctures (Drew & Holt 1995, 1998; Holt & Drew 2005; Jefferson 1984; Küttner 2020).

Finally, pivoting practices have recently also been documented in the domain of embodied conduct, suggesting that they may also play a role in the (trans)formation and organization of action through modes of conduct other than talk (Lerner & Raymond 2017; Golato et al., in prep.).

It should be noted that some scholars adopt a broader, more strongly syntax-based understanding of pivots, which allows for the inclusion of prosodically discontinuous, incrementally built structures under the heading of pivots (see, for example, the contributions to the special issue on "Pivot constructions in talk-in-interaction", edited by Norén & Linell 2013). Norén & Linell (2013) propose the qualified term "pivot-like constructions" for structures that can be analyzed as pivots from a grammatical/syntactic but not necessarily from a prosodic-phonetic point of view.

Outside of CA, lexico-syntactic pivots of the type illustrated in the figure above have been discussed under such diverse labels as 'syntactic amalgams' (Lambrecht 1988), 'syntactic double binds' or '*janus*-faced utterances' (Franck 1985), as well as 'apokoinu' constructions, a term derived from Greek denoting the corresponding rhetorical/stylistic device (Scheutz 1992; see also Norén 2007).

Additional Related Entries:

- **Turn-taking**
- **Modular pivot**
- **Rush-through**
- **Transition-relevance place (TRP)**
- **Turn-constructive unit (TCU)**
- **Increment**
- **Turn holding**
- **Self-repair**

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