



“SO YOU’RE TELLING ME . . . ”: PARAPHRASING (FORMULATING), AFFECTIVE STANCE, AND ACTIVE LISTENING

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ABSTRACT

Paraphrasing is one of the core practices associated with active listening. While its use is widely advocated, research on its efficacy shows limited results. Paraphrasing-like actions have been studied extensively in conversation analytic research under the term formulations. Building on that tradition, this article features a conversation analysis of the affective stance that paraphrasing turns display toward their referents. Primary data drawn from a podcast series, *Conversations with People Who Hate Me*, are supplemented with instances drawn from mediation and a medical interview. Affiliative paraphrases feature components such as positive assessments, empathy displays, and shared laughter. Neutral paraphrases withhold markers of positive or negative orientation to their referents. Disaffiliative paraphrases restate what was said before in ways that convey skepticism or leave the prior talk vulnerable to criticism. Ambiguous paraphrases may reflect both affiliative and disaffiliative components; responses provide evidence for how recipients orient to their stance. Affiliative and neutral paraphrases may most closely approach the spirit of active listening. Greater understanding of how stance shapes paraphrasing can enrich research and practice in active listening.

Introduction

Paraphrasing what another speaker has said is a core practice associated with active listening. Paraphrasing displays that one is listening and what one is understanding. It gives the prior speaker an opportunity to affirm, amend, or reject that understanding, potentially providing greater congruence between speakers. It can slow down the urge to argue back. Advocacy of restating another speaker’s talk as part of active listening has roots in the work of Carl Rogers (1965), who located it within a therapeutic approach grounded in empathy, congruence, and unconditional positive regard (Hopper, 2018). Paraphrasing closely links to reframing (Burgess, 2013b) and stands as one practice of Active-Empathic Listening (Manusov, 2020, p. 105). Practitioners advocate paraphrasing across a wide range of contexts (Bodie et al., 2015, p. 152), including mediation (Beer & Packard, 2012), conflict resolution (Burgess, 2013a), negotiation (Bordone, 2007), difficult conversations (Stone et al., 2010), and interpersonal communication (West & Turner, 2006, p. 143) as part of the “speaker listener technique” (e.g., PREPMedia, 2019; You&me.we, 2009).

Despite the near-dogma status of paraphrasing in listening and communication literature, there remain questions about its suitability and efficacy. Students and trainees first learning to paraphrase sometimes express unease at its perceived artificiality. This resonates with Korobov’s (2022) finding that in their unscripted conversations, romantic couples “. . . do not consistently display the types of scripted active listening recommended by educators and therapists.” There have been disagreements

regarding the efficacy of paraphrasing in married couples' communication (Gottman et al., 1998, 2000; Stanley et al., 2000). Furthermore, the relevance or perceived value of active listening may change within the course of an ongoing relationship (Manusov, 2020, pp. 110–111). Some research findings affirm limited support for the value of active listening, including paraphrasing (Jonsdottir & Fridriksdottir, 2020; Weger et al., 2010). A controlled study comparing trained to untrained undergraduates found that subjects perceived those using paraphrases as more attractive and likeable (Weger et al., 2010). However, the researchers found no significant correlation between use of paraphrases with subjects feeling understood or satisfied with the interview. In another study, Weger et al. (2014) reported that recipients of active listening (including paraphrasing) felt more understood compared to those who received advice or simple acknowledgments.

As these incomplete and mixed results suggest, there is more to learn about how paraphrasing contributes to the complex ebb and flow of real-life interactions. Deeper, more nuanced analyses of actual talk can enrich theory and practice of a core listening practice. In pursuing such aims, this paper addresses one research priority identified by the International Listening Associatio:

What is the evidence for claims made about listening behavior, listening processes, and listening barriers in the popular, technical, and academic literatures? (Bodie et al., 2019).

Paraphrases have been studied extensively in conversation analytic research under the label of *formulations*. This line of inquiry began with an observation by Garfinkel and Sacks (1970, p. 350) that sometimes a speaker

may treat some part of the conversation as an occasion to describe that conversation, to explain it, or characterize it, or explicate it, or translate, or summarize, or furnish the gist of it, or take note of its accordance with rules, or remark on its departure from rules. That is to say, a member may use some part of the conversation as an occasion to *formulate* the conversation . . .

While formulating practices vary widely, turns in which one speaker formulates what another has said correspond most closely to paraphrases. Heritage and Watson (1979) observed that such formulations preserve, delete, and transform various components of the preceding talk. They tend toward capturing either the *gist* (the essence) or the *upshot* (an unstated implication) of prior talk. Studies have explicated the structure and workings of formulations in news interviews (Heritage, 1985), talk radio (Hutchby, 1996), employment interviews (Ragan, 1983), courtrooms (Van der Houwen, 2009), medical interviews (Beach & Dixon, 2001; Gafaranga & Britton, 2004; Tiitinen & Ruusuvoori, 2014), psychotherapy and counseling (Antaki et al., 2005; Hutchby, 2005; Korman et al., 2013), meetings (Barnes, 2007), labor negotiations (Walker, 1995), and mediation (Dewhurst, 1991; Garcia, 1995; Glenn, 2016; Greatbatch & Dingwall, 1989; Heisterkamp, 2006). Following up on Drew's (2003) suggestion, researchers have compared formulations across situations and purposes. For example, Weiste and Perykyla (2013) show how therapists use highlighting, rephrasing, relocating, and exaggerating formulations, but that these are differentially distributed in use between different therapeutic methods. In contrast to their wide use in professional contexts, Drew (2003) reports finding few formulations in a large collection of recorded, ordinary conversations.

Some prior research has noticed how formulation turns demonstrate an affective *stance* (Lindström & Sorjonen, 2013, p. 351) toward their referent. For example, a mediator's formulations may display *neutrality* by reflecting the content of what was said without overtly *affiliating* or *disaffiliating* (Heisterkamp, 2006) or by their parallel structure, responding similarly to each participant in the presence of both participants (Glenn, 2016). On the other hand, mediators may paraphrase disputants' offers in ways that support or disagree with them, moving away from neutrality toward partisanship (Garcia, 1995, p. 41).

The terms *paraphrase* and *formulation* overlap substantially in capturing the phenomenon investigated here. They carry different connotations. *Paraphrase* foregrounds attention to how one linguistic unit or text can be understood as a rewording another. *Formulation* emphasizes sequential action that occurs as part of and contributes to how participants jointly organize and interpret talk. While the

latter term conveys important insights about language and social interaction, I will henceforth use *paraphrasing* as the term having wider currency among listening scholars and trainers.

The issue of stance in paraphrasing provides analytic focus for the present study. Specific research questions include:

How do speakers convey stance in paraphrasing another speaker's talk?

How do stance displays in paraphrases shape subsequent talk?

Data and Method

The data for this study include a variety of naturalistic interactions (not created or shaped by researchers). The primary collection consists of formulation instances from a podcast, *Conversations With People Who Hate Me (CWPWHM)* (<https://www.dylanmarron.com/podcast>). In *CWPWHM*, host Dylan Marron converses with people who have written negative things about him online or moderates discussions between persons who have exchanged hostile messages. By introducing active listening into situations where hostile communication has occurred online, *CWPWHM* instantiates a switch from social listening (Gearhart & Maben, 2021; Stewart & Arnold, 2018) to synchronous, in-person speaking and listening. The show has won awards and recognition (including a TED talk and a book: Marron, 2022), earning praise for its attempt to model and promote positive communication. Thus, it merits study for the likelihood that it reflects valuable active listening practices. Most of the recorded conversations in *CWPWHM* take place by audio-only; some of the three-way interactions combine face to face and audio interaction. The edited episodes and word-only transcripts are available at the website cited above. The ubiquity of podcasts, many of which rely heavily on conversation, make them compelling objects of study. They offer insights about talk that may generalize to other contexts. A podcast host may be concerned with keeping the talk moving along and paraphrasing for the benefit of third parties as well as the prior speaker. However, managers, mediators, and teachers, to name three, may face similar concerns.

As I reviewed the podcast transcripts and recordings from 2017 to 2019, I identified nearly 100 candidate paraphrasing instances. From these, I selected a subset of 40 paraphrases by one speaker of what another speaker has said (most are done by host Dylan Marron; some are done by guests). A graduate research assistant created rough-draft transcripts, following conversation analytic conventions¹ (Hepburn & Bolden, 2017). I closely reviewed and revised the transcripts. Responsibility for accuracy of transcribed excerpts is mine.

As I revised transcripts, I wrote detailed descriptive notes on each instance. As patterns emerged, instances were sorted into collections of neutral, positive, negative, or ambiguous paraphrases. Consistent with conversation analytic methods (Sidnell & Stivers, 2014), the analysis identifies the utterances and sequences through which people organize interactions and manage their identities and relationships. The emphasis on interactive sequences moves beyond conceiving of speech acts in isolation to tracing the joint construction of meaning and action.

I have supplemented instances drawn from *CWPWHM* with others from existing published studies and collections of ordinary conversation, employment interviews, small claims mediation, and podcast interviews. Doing so invites comparing paraphrases across settings and consideration of generalizability of findings. In all cases, materials are either publicly available online or were obtained according to research protocols in place at the time of their gathering. The report that follows includes some instances drawn from these additional sources.

Analysis

More than simply restating in different words what was said, turns in which speakers paraphrase routinely display an affective *stance* toward the materials they paraphrase. They may be affiliative,

¹Thanks to Christina Fasone for creating first drafts of the *CWPWHM* transcripts.

supporting the prior speaker's action and showing empathy. They may be neutral, lacking overt markers of affiliation or disaffiliation. They may be disaffiliative, displaying negative affect toward prior talk or making it vulnerable to criticism. Paraphrases may reflect ambivalent turn design, showing both affiliative and disaffiliative elements, or shifting from one to another stance. Stance, while communicated in paraphrasing turns, is also co-constructed through recipient responses and subsequent talk. Analysis will show how the prior speaker's response shapes what the paraphrase is doing.

Affiliative paraphrases

Affiliation can be demonstrated through claimed shared identity, perspective taking, formulaic expressions that demonstrate "getting" what the speaker is conveying, and assessments of the prior speaker's behavior and views as reasonable and moral.

In this instance from *CWPWHM*, guest Aly is explaining why as a teenager she wrote hateful, homophobic messages about herself anonymously on social media (see Table 1 for explanation of transcribing symbols).

(CWPWHM Episode 14, 15:31)

1	Aly:	ˈhh I was struggling <u>really</u> hard to come out as
2		bisexual.
3	Dyl:	Yeah.
4	Aly:	A:n' (0.5) I- I think it goes back to the beating
5		them to the punch thi:ng. A[: lot of people were
6	Dyl:	[°Mm.°
7		kind of figuring it out?
8	Dyl:	Oh- ehuh [S-So there were people whose ˈhh whose
9	Aly:	[An-
10	Dyl:	gaydar was going off. An:d
11	Aly:	Oh: ɛyeahɛ. H[hh
12	Dyl:	[Yeah. Yeah. Eh hih heh Go(h)t it. Got
13		[it.
14	Aly:	[ˈihh

Table 1. Transcribing Symbols.

⌈	brackets on successive lines indicate overlapping talk
word=	Equal marks indicate no discernable pause between
=word	turns or sounds
(.)	micropause
(2.0)	timed pauses in seconds
wo:rd	colon indicates stretching of preceding sound
word.	period indicates falling intonation
word,	comma indicates relatively constant intonation
word?	question mark indicates upward intonation
↑ word ↓ word	arrows indicate marked intonation shift
word-	single dash indicates abrupt sound cutoff.
Word, WORD	underlining indicates emphasis, capitals louder still
˚word˚	degree marks indicate decreased volume of materials between
hhh	h's indicate audible aspiration, possibly laughter
ˆhhh	superscript period indicates inbreath audible aspiration, possibly laughter
wo(h)rd	h's within parentheses indicate within-speech aspiration, possibly laughter
ɛwordɛ	pound signs indicate "smile voice" delivery of materials in between
((cough))	indicates some sound or feature of the talk which is not easily transcribable
(word)	parentheses indicate transcriber doubt about hearing of passage

Note. Based on system developed by Gail Jefferson. List adapted from (Antaki, 2011), p. xii.

Another marker of affiliative stance involves casting the other speaker as sympathetic, acting reasonably in the face of adversity. The following example is drawn from the opening moments of a landlord-tenant mediation. The tenant tells her story of having fallen far behind on rent payments (not shown). While providing a summary, the mediator adds empathetic elements (line 97, 106). He characterizes her intentions positively (lines 103–104) and minimizes what she needs (lines 108–109). Ann and her companion confirm and elaborate on elements of the paraphrasing summary (lines 96, 98, 100, 102, 105, 107, 110).

(Small claims mediation, Glenn, 2016)

92 Chuck: Mmkay. (0.8) So (0.7) jus-just so I c'n
 93 >confirm what I heard< and (0.2) Frank
 94 'preciate your patience (0.6) um >as **you've**
 95 **lost your job**, [(0.4)
 96 Ann: [°Yeah°=
 97 Chuck: **=Which which (.) I'm [sure was difficult**
 98 Ann: [About three months ago=
 99 Chuck: =Yeah three months ago=
 100 Comp: =°February second°
 101 (0.4)
 102 Ann: [[Yeah it was in February]
 103 Chuck: [[**Yeah and then you're (.)**] **workin' to ↑catch**
 104 **up**, (0.3)
 105 Ann: °Right°
 106 Chuck: **Luckily you have a ↑new job**,
 107 Ann: °Yeah°
 108 Chuck: **But it sounds like you need** (0.2) **a little**
 109 **ti[me depending**
 110 Ann: [A little time to °(pay it back)°

This complex paraphrase displays affiliation through empathic assessments and wording that portrays the tenant's actions as well intentioned and reasonable.

Neutral paraphrases

A neutral paraphrase, neither affiliating with nor disaffiliating, displays understanding of the prior speaker's claims or perspectives. In this instance, Dylan responds to a lengthy turn (the final part is shown below) in which Greg praises Dylan's program as a positive form of activism while condemning athletes kneeling during the national anthem:

(CWPWHM Episode 9, 33:06)

1 Grg: So it's not the fact that they're protesting that's
 2 upsetting. It's just the way they're doing it and who:
 3 they're protesting.=↓'Cause (1.5) it's no:t (1.0) the flag
 4 it's no:t (.2) the United States that's: (0.4) mm I guess::
 5 o:ppressing them 'r whatever it i:s=I mean if it's 'hh the
 6 local police or it's (0.3) ya know if they feel it's just the
 7 legislation or wh-whatever they feel is the: ↑cause of it (.)
 8 is the problem. N-not (0.3) the greater (1.8) ↑thing.
 9 Dyl: **Yeah. So- (.) so no:t ta:** (0.3) **put words in your mouth but**
 10 **only to: kinda confirm what you're saying, 'hh u[hh**
 11 Grg: [(uhuh,)
 12 Dyl: **You prefer: thi:s podcast as a form of activism to the**
 13 **idea of: taking a knee during the national anthem.**
 14 Grg: I do.=I prefer it because I feel like i-it will
 15 change people's minds it's not gonna be an immediate
 16 shut down (.2) I don't li:ke this I'm not gonna
 17 listen to this guy 'cause he's an idiot.

Dylan projects that a paraphrase is forthcoming by stating what he is attempting to do and not do by providing it (lines 9–10). The concise paraphrase that follows (lines 12–13) is packaged in nonspecific, dispassionate wording: prefer, this podcast, a form of activism, idea, taking a knee. Absent are any indicators of Dylan’s judgment about the position he is formulating. He reinforces this sense of neutrality by a calm, modulated vocal tone. Greg affirms the paraphrase (“I do.”) and elaborates on this reasoning.

Another example of neutral paraphrasing comes from one of Dylan’s guests rather than Dylan. E has criticized what he sees as the excessive use of trigger warnings. Dylan accounts for his own use of trigger warnings. E’s paraphrase claims understanding of Dylan’s policy:

(CWPWHM Episode 8, 25:40 – 26:40)

1 Dyl: ‘hh But like (0.7) if- (0.8) I mean- (1.0) if: uhh >you know<
 2 fourteen year old E:: heard this, (0.7) u:m (0.3) like (0.3)
 3 this could be:: (0.8) a dangerous thing for someone to hear
 4 (0.5) if they are going through these feelings right now=an’
 5 tha- an- †that’s why I would put a trigger warning not about
 6 offending people. ‘hh um It’s just to be like Hey (0.7) I-I
 7 just wanna let you know that this is a topic that’s coming
 8 up? An:’ an’ (0.3) y you might be: ‘hhhh u:m (.5) affected
 9 [by this topic.=
 10 E: [Mm hm.
 11 E: =So s:o um: (.) a >specific trigger warning.<
 12 Dyl: yeh=

Next, E begins a second, contrastive component to the paraphrase. Displaying recognition of what will follow, Dylan strongly disavows what might be construed as overdone or gratuitous use of trigger warnings. E gives voice to that overdone position. Dylan provides his own versions of that overdone position, laughs, and further distances himself from such it. He then formulates what he *does* try to convey via a trigger warning. As E’s reply (lines 26, 28) makes clear, they share understanding of the distinction and their dislike of overdone trigger warnings; however, they do not agree on the legitimate place for a trigger warning that Dylan has articulated.

13 E: =Not just (.)
 14 Dyl: †oh no [no no]
 15 E: [Trigger warning: sum’n’s in here.
 16 Dyl: Trigger war[ni:ng] (.) we disagree (.) please don’t
 17 E: [(yeah)]
 18 Dyl: listen if you wanna uh hee hee hee n’I wouldn’t put
 19 th[at at all. um It woul]d- It would just be like
 20 E: [syuh huh huh. ‘ss °(hey)]
 21 Dyl: Hey trigger warning u:m W:e talk about (.) suicide.
 22 And I just want to b:e: upfront about that so that
 23 If that’s something that affects you you should
 24 †probably not listen to this episode.
 25 (0.7)
 26 E: †I [du]nno. I mean (.) that’s sort of a: harder
 27 Dyl: [()]
 28 E: thing tuh (.) pin down I guess,

Expanded paraphrase sequences may show progression from neutrality to affiliation. The following example is drawn from a medical interview, in which a physician’s assistant (INT) provides a multi-part, summary paraphrase of what the patient (PAT) has said. The first part is stated neutrally: “you’ve

gained about thirteen pounds.”² The next components move toward affiliation by paraphrasing adverse circumstances in PAT’s life (feeling sluggish, demands at work, little time for herself) while praising her (you tend to work hard). PAT affirms, and after a brief pause INT offers a strongly empathetic assessment: “[That doesn’t] sound like very much.” Patient agrees, with laughter, and INT opens a new topic concerning depression:

(SDCL: Kaiser#1, Beach and Dixson, 2000. PAT had been describing how work and home commitments kept her from relaxing and spending time by herself.)

1 INT: So from what I’m understa:nding .hhh in the last year
 2 you’ve gained about thirteen pounds. (0.2) In the last four
 3 months, you’ve been feeling a >little bit< sluggish:. The
 4 demands at wor:k which you say I am a workaholic
 5 [and] so you tend to work hard there an- and work at=
 6 PAT: [°Umhm°]
 7 INT: = home as well. .hh And then the demands at home are from
 8 your husband on one side and your children on the other. .hh
 9 And >basically the only time that I hear that you have for
 10 yourself = is once a month on a Thursday night when you
 11 go to church.<
 12 PAT: °Right°.
 13 (0.4)
 14 PAT: [Hhhh uh huh]
 15 INT: [That doesn’t] sound like very much
 16 PAT: \$It’s not much.\$ [.hhhh heh hhh]
 17 INT: [° O k a y °]. Tell me about depression=
 18 Has that been an issue for you.

Disaffiliative paraphrases

A paraphrase may convey negative affect toward the preceding talk or cast it in a negative light. Unsurprisingly, these do not occur commonly in *CWPWHM*. In one instance, a paraphrase conveys disaffiliation by casting the other speaker’s position as unreasonable. Prior to (and providing the impetus for) this conversation, Doug had referred to Dylan as a “talentless propaganda hack” in comments underneath Dylan’s social media account announcing an episode of *CWPWHM*. After several minutes of Dylan asking and Doug explaining why he wrote that comment (not shown), Dylan offers this paraphrase:

(*CWPWHM*, Episode 13, 3:25)

1 Dyl: **So you: (0.3) thought that I was (.) a talentless propaganda**
 2 **hack beca:use you disagreed with my views. Right?**
 3 Dou: †Well I th-think it’s more that. (0.7) It seems to be: at
 4 least in so many videos I see it’s almost the exact
 5 sa:me (0.4) s:ort of (.) vie:w that’s always presented out
 6 there.
 7 Dyl: But it is interesting (.) that you s- that you wrote this
 8 under the video. . . .

Dylan formulates Doug’s position as something like: “Because I (Doug) disagreed with you, I formed a negative opinion of you as a person (and therefore, I decided to belittle and insult

²It is possible that the video recording might indicate ways in which the PA conveys an affective stance vocally or visually. Nothing in the transcript indicates such.

you in your own comment box).” It implies that Doug behaved inappropriately, transforming a mere difference of opinion into a personal attack. With the appended “Right?” it invites Doug’s agreement. However, Doug disconfirms the paraphrase. He does not dispute that they have differing views, but he rejects that as the sole explanation for his action. He criticizes Dylan’s online content as being like that in many other videos, thereby legitimizing calling it “propaganda.” In short, Doug treats Dylan’s paraphrase, not merely as inaccurate, but as disaffiliative.

The paraphrase’s stance may be ambiguously affiliative and disaffiliative, as in the following. Prior to this conversation, Matthew had criticized online a video that Dylan had posted. Here, Matthew is explaining his position regarding achieving social change; he frames his disagreement with Dylan as one of means, not ends. The transcript picks up near the end of Matthew’s lengthy turn:

(CWPWHM, Episode 3, 5:26)

- Mat: =Ya know I- I would ↑love it if: (0.2) we could ↓hh you know completely dem:olish hatred. Uh:: and ↓h’live in a world with- you know- pure social justice= ↑That’d be fan↑tastic. ↓hhh Uhh However I think that=↓hh uhh mm you know y- you can’t achieve (0.2) that much cha(h)nge so ↑quickly. Ummm Change is (0.6) daily?
- Dyl: Mm h[m]
- Mat: [Cha]nge is incremental? Change is hard to ↑git to,
- Dyl: ↑mm ↓[hm]
- Mat: [uh]m and it takes ↓hh uh: a- a little bit of: hard ↑work and a little bit of: pain and (0.6) um: (0.4) that’s that’s jus- >part of th-deal of ↑life.<
- Dyl: **Mm. °pt° So you’re telling me (.) all of the world can’t be changed (0.3) from one (0.6) very concise (.) ahh satirical ↓internet video. (0.5)**
- Dyl: **Is that the news you’re breaking to me?=
Mat: =Ehh heh heh ↓uh uh° ↓ehh Uhhnfortunately nohht. ↓ehh Unfortunately not.**
- Dyl: So M- Matthew why: did you ↑write that?=
Mat: What inspired you to write that about me.

The first clause, “**So you’re telling me,**” projects that a paraphrase will follow. Its declarative syntax suggests certainty about and perhaps skepticism toward what Matthew is saying. In the actual paraphrasing component, exaggerated language (“**all of the world;**” “**one (0.6) very concise**”) conveys with sarcasm the paraphrased position. Repeated vocal emphases and multiple pauses between words and phrases reinforce that sense. The ambiguity lies in the sarcasm’s direction: is Dylan satirizing Matthew for stating the obvious, by joking at Matthew’s expense? Or is Dylan affiliating with Matthew and making fun of himself, for thinking that his videos would change the world?

That ambiguity is reflected in the recipient’s delayed and ambiguous response. He is initially silent (the 0.5 pause). Dylan tries again, with sarcasm, giving him another opportunity. Matthew responds at first with just laughter, itself ambiguous, neither affiliating nor disaffiliating. Then he provides a more affiliative read, agreeing with the paraphrase while lamenting what it implies about social change. Laugh breaths infuse the words and contribute to a friendlier vocal tone.

Conclusion

Paraphrases and the turns in which they appear routinely display a stance toward their referent. Affiliative paraphrases support the action, take the perspective of, or empathize with the speaker of prior talk. Neutral paraphrases restate what was said without showing positive or negative affect. Disaffiliative paraphrases mark resistance to or cast as problematic the materials to which they refer. Real-life paraphrases come in complex turns and sequences that may combine stances, progressing from neutrality to affiliation, for example, or ambiguously marking both disaffiliation and affiliation.

Affiliative paraphrases seem most closely to embody the intentions and spirit of active listening as discussed in much of the listening literature. They show a speaker claiming understanding of another's perspectives, feelings, and experiences and providing social support. Not surprisingly, they tend to occur when the other speaker is recounting stories or describing experiences and feelings. Neutral paraphrases seem devoted to capturing key facts, ideas, rationales, and the like. In *CWPWHM*, host Dylan Marron provides neutral paraphrases as disagreements get foregrounded or speakers account for controversial actions. Paraphrasing that casts the other speaker's talk as problematic or responds to it sarcastically may be treated as disaffiliative. At their more pronounced, paraphrases that "hijack" the action or sense of the prior turn, transforming it into something new, may seem to stray from the spirit of active listening. However, this may also approach *reframing*, crucial to the work of mediators and counselors. Reframing a speaker's self-deprecating remark to a more compassionate self-statement, for example, may disaffiliate from the stance taken in the prior talk while affiliating with the speaker as the target of the remark. In brief, a range of stance displays, affiliative to neutral to disaffiliative, may contribute to the more positive aims of active listening.

In addition to responding directly to prior talk, paraphrases contribute to unfolding courses of action, and those courses can reflect institutional or individual agendas. In a study of counselors meeting with children of divorcing parents, Hutchby (2005, p. 327) noted that listening is "much more 'constructive' or 'directive' than it is simply active;" specifically, the counselors' formulations play a part in "sequences that perform translations of a child's talk into therapeutic objects; in other words, recasting it in terms that may be amenable to a counseling intervention." Similarly, nurses use formulations to encourage talk about problem-relevant issues (Tiitinen & Ruusuvoori, 2014), and mediator formulations help shape participant concerns into negotiable issues (Glenn, 2016). In *CWPWHM*, host Dylan Marron attempts to connect with his guests, transcending while not ignoring differences. Paraphrasing contributes richly to that goal. Affiliative paraphrases seek moments of empathic connection, neutral paraphrases claim understanding of ideas and positions, and disaffiliative paraphrases may sustain oppositions or enhance the entertainment value of the moment for overhearers.

While stance gets conveyed through features of word selection, turn design, and vocal delivery, the actions accomplished by any turn at talk are best understood within sequence and activity. It is crucial to analyze prior talk, especially the materials that it seeks to paraphrase. Likewise, what follows next will shape meaning. The recipient of a paraphrase may affirm it, let it pass without comment, reject it, amend it, and so forth. The recipient's response will display an understanding of the paraphrase and provides further evidence of its stance.

Additional studies of real-life paraphrases could further explicate how these key moments of active-empathic listening work. In ongoing conversations, what kinds of talk or actions seem to draw paraphrases? Do certain situations make positive, negative, or neutrally stanced paraphrases more relevant? Might positive paraphrases come across as, or get treated as, more empathic? Might they more likely get confirmation? How do elements of *turn design* or *vocal delivery* (for example, questioning vs declarative syntax or intonation) and *vocal delivery* influence how paraphrases work? Might positive paraphrases come across as, or get treated as, more empathetic? Studies of paraphrasing in other settings could enrich the present findings, as well. Transcription, description, and analysis of real-life interactions invites grounded consideration of these and relating questions, adding depth and complexity to our understanding of paraphrasing.

The subtleties of displaying stance call for greater precision in prescriptive literature on paraphrasing. Active listening training that takes these findings into account can help learners develop a more realistic sense of how paraphrasing works. Effective paraphrasing needs to be fitted to the specific moment, respective roles of participants, and the interactional purpose or agenda. Greater awareness of stance in paraphrasing can help both those doing the paraphrasing and those responding to it. Affiliative and neutral paraphrases can contribute powerfully to enhanced understanding and empathic connection. Even disaffiliative paraphrasing, done in the right way and in the right place, may provide course correction to a line of talk or introduce much-needed playfulness. In demonstrating that the speaker is engaged, attentive, and empathetic, effective paraphrases can play a central role in “good” listening (Manusov, 2020, p. 111) and merit attention in the growing literature on positive interpersonal communication (Mirivel, 2014; Socha & Pitts, 2012; Velázquez & Pulido, 2019).

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