

Artificiality and Intelligence as Interactional Achievements

The intelligence of some participants in conversation is constantly in question. A beat too long of silence, one too many disfluencies, or an unaccountable action can lead to the withdrawal of attributions of competence, agency, and personhood. In interactions involving intellectually disabled people and so-called 'AI assistants', we can observe the practices through which such attributions are displayed, upheld, or withdrawn. Treating 'intelligence' as an interactional achievement rather than a preordained status moves beyond framings of AI as a 'conversational technology', exploring its role within the social infrastructure that Sacks (1984) called "the technology of conversation". Using Conversation Analysis (CA), this talk draws on a case study involving a person with an intellectual disability using an LLM-based smart speaker in their home. The analysis shows how their methods of dealing with interactional trouble not only implicate problems of speaking, hearing, and understanding, but also wider questions about agency, intelligence, and personhood.