Conversing the audience
A methodological exploration of how Conversation Analysis can contribute to the analysis of participatory journalism

Journalism has always relied on a certain degree of audience participation. The rise of the Internet has, however, increased both the focus on and significance of audience participation not only in journalism, but in all forms of mass-mediated communication. Yet, few have addressed exactly what kind of relationship is shaped in for instance online newspapers when journalists and their audience interact, or when members of the audience interact with each other within the space of an online newspaper. What forms of community is structured in for instance online newspapers’ discussion forums? To what degree do interactions in comments to stories resemble face-to-face interactions? How do technology and time/space variables affect the dialogue between journalists and readers when online newspapers make use of new applications like CoveritLive? This paper seeks to explore such questions by discussing how the methodology of Conversation Analysis (CA) can be utilized to gain a deeper understanding of the dialogical relationship shaped by the blurred boarders between journalists and their audiences. The paper argues that CA is a valuable approach to conduct qualitative investigations into the types of relationships and communities that emerge in online media, whether it is group conversations in social media, online discussion forums of all kinds, or journalist-audience interactions in for instance CoveritLive sessions in online newspapers.