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Negotiating Meaning through Overlapping Talk: A Corpus-Based Conversational Analysis of the Chomsky–Foucault Debate

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Abstract

This study examines overlapping talk in the 1971 Chomsky–Foucault debate using a corpus-based Conversation Analysis (CA) framework. Overlapping talk, simultaneous speech by two or more speakers, is typically treated as incidental in everyday conversation, but its strategic function in high-stakes intellectual debate remains underexplored. Using the UAM Corpus Tool, the debate transcript was segmented, annotated, and analyzed to identify accidental, intentional, recycling, competitive, and resolving overlaps, alongside their interactional functions. Quantitative analysis revealed that accidental overlaps were equally produced by both speakers, whereas Foucault employed the majority of intentional and competitive overlaps, reflecting assertive floor-taking strategies, while Chomsky more frequently used resolving overlaps, emphasizing cooperative turn management. Qualitative analysis showed that overlaps were interactionally meaningful: they enabled argument reframing, epistemic positioning, and negotiation of authority, while recycling and resolving overlaps maintained continuity and minimized conflict. Critically, these findings indicate that overlapping talk in formal intellectual exchanges functions not as disruption but as a rhetorical and interactional resource, balancing competition and cooperation. By integrating corpus-based annotation with CA, this study highlights the nuanced role of simultaneous speech in negotiating meaning, asserting authority, and managing discourse flow in adversarial academic dialogue.

Keywords: Conversation Analysis, overlapping talk, interactional dynamics, turn-taking, intellectual debate, discourse strategies, corpus-based study

1. Introduction

CA has emerged as a prominent methodology for examining the organization and structure of naturally occurring talk-in-interaction (Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974; Sidnell & Stivers, 2013). Central to CA is the study of overlapping talk, a phenomenon in which two or more speakers produce speech simultaneously, resulting in the temporal overlap of turns. Overlaps are not merely conversational disruptions; they serve important interactional functions, revealing strategies through which participants negotiate meaning, manage turn-taking, and assert positions within discourse (Jefferson, 1986; Schegloff, 2000; Yeomans et al., 2023).

While extensive research has addressed overlapping talk in informal, everyday conversations, less attention has been devoted to its role in formal and intellectually demanding contexts, such as public debates or dialogues among leading scholars. In such high-stakes interactions, overlaps can function as rhetorical devices, signaling disagreement, contesting ideas, or strategically asserting authority (Pickering & Garrod, 2004; Yeomans et al., 2023). Analyzing these overlaps provides insights not only into turn-taking mechanisms but also into how participants manage social and epistemic power within discourse.

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The 1971 debate between linguist Noam Chomsky and philosopher Michel Foucault, which addressed critical questions about language, power, and human agency, exemplifies such a context (Chomsky & Foucault, 1971/2006). Their exchange, characterized by sharp contrasts in perspective and argumentation style, creates a rich discursive environment in which overlapping talk is frequent and functionally significant. Understanding these overlaps offers a window into the negotiation of meaning and intellectual authority in high-level academic discourse.

This study adopts a corpus-based approach to examine the nature, patterns, and interactional roles of overlapping talk in the Chomsky–Foucault debate. By systematically analyzing the frequency, distribution, and communicative functions of overlaps, it aims to demonstrate how simultaneous speech operates as a discursive resource, extending CA research beyond everyday conversation and institutional settings into the domain of intellectual debate (Yeomans et al., 2023; Boland et al., 2023).

1.1 Research Gap

Although previous CA studies have explored overlapping talk in casual interactions and institutional contexts such as classrooms, interviews, and meetings (Schegloff, 2000; Sidnell, 2013), systematic analyses of overlaps in formal debates among prominent intellectuals remain limited. This study addresses that gap by focusing on the Chomsky–Foucault debate, providing insights into how overlaps function as tools for managing disagreement, asserting authority, and shaping the flow of intellectual exchanges.

1.2 Research Objectives

This study seeks to:

- Examine the frequency and distribution of overlapping talk in the 1971 Chomsky–Foucault debate.
- Identify and analyze the interactional functions of overlaps, including interruption, agreement, disagreement, and floor management.
- Interpret how overlaps influence the dynamics and structure of this high-stakes intellectual exchange.

1.3 Research Questions

1. How frequently and in what forms does overlapping talk occur in the Chomsky–Foucault debate?
2. What interactional functions do overlaps serve, particularly regarding interruption, alignment, disagreement, and floor management?
3. How do these overlaps shape the overall dynamics and flow of the debate?

2. Literature Review

Conversation has long been recognised as a central mechanism through which social actors negotiate meaning, construct shared knowledge, and manage disagreement. In interactional terms, conversation can be glossed as a jointly produced, turn-based verbal activity in which participants continuously coordinate understanding, intentions, and social relations (Clark, 1996; Yeomans et al., 2023). Recent scholarship underscores that meaning in conversation is not transmitted unilaterally but emerges dynamically through sequential organisation, repair, overlap, and response timing. This interactional perspective is particularly relevant for high-

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stakes intellectual encounters such as the Chomsky–Foucault debate, where ideological divergence is managed moment-by-moment through talk.

A growing body of post-2021 research has revitalised conversation studies by integrating CA with corpus-based and computational methods. Conversation analysis may be glossed as a micro-analytic approach that examines how social actions are accomplished through the sequential organisation of talk-in-interaction (Heritage, 2008; Stokoe, 2021). Yeomans et al. (2023) argue that recent advances in recording technologies, natural language processing (NLP), and open research practices have enabled scholars to analyse naturally occurring conversations at scale without sacrificing interactional detail. This methodological shift addresses a long-standing tension between the descriptive richness of CA and the scalability demanded by corpus linguistics.

Within this renewed framework, overlapping talk has received particular attention. Overlap can be glossed as simultaneous speech produced by two or more participants, often signalling competition for the floor, alignment, affiliation, or epistemic stance (Schegloff, 2000; Kendrick & Torreira, 2015). Recent studies published by Sage and Taylor & Francis demonstrate that overlap is not merely disruptive but can function as a resource for negotiating agreement, displaying understanding, or contesting authority (Jefferson, 2021; Mondada, 2022). In philosophical and political debates, overlap frequently indexes ideological tension and the urgency to reframe meaning, making it analytically central to the Chomsky–Foucault encounter.

Yeomans et al. (2023) contribute significantly to this discussion by distinguishing dialogue from single-voiced texts. Dialogue is glossed as multi-party, sequentially responsive discourse in which each turn is shaped by prior turns and constrains subsequent ones. Unlike edited monologic texts, dialogue is characterised by interruptions, repairs, hesitations, and overlaps, all of which complicate meaning but also make it observable. This distinction is crucial for corpus-based analyses of debates, where ideological positioning unfolds interactively rather than rhetorically in isolation.

Recent corpus-assisted CA studies further demonstrate how turn-level annotation allows researchers to trace epistemic authority, stance-taking, and disagreement across extended interactions (Deppermann & Streeck, 2021; Kärkkäinen, 2022). These studies show that meaning negotiation often occurs not through explicit argumentation alone but through micro-interactional practices such as turn-entry timing, overlap resolution, and repair initiation. Such findings provide a strong empirical rationale for examining overlapping talk in the Chomsky–Foucault debate as a site where philosophical meanings are actively contested and recalibrated.

Methodologically, Yeomans et al. (2023) advocate a dual-level analytical architecture combining turn-level data and speaker-level data. Turn-level data may be glossed as fine-grained representations of individual speaking turns, including timing, speaker identity, and linguistic content, whereas speaker-level data capture participant attributes and outcomes beyond the interaction itself. This distinction has been adopted in recent studies analysing debates, classrooms, and institutional talk, where overlap frequency and interruption patterns are linked to power asymmetries and epistemic dominance (Li et al., 2022; Pérez-Paredes & Markee, 2024).

Importantly, recent literature cautions against treating overlap as a uniform phenomenon. Mondada (2022) and Stokoe (2021) demonstrate that overlaps vary functionally, ranging from affiliative completions to adversarial interruptions. Corpus-based annotation schemes now increasingly distinguish competitive overlap, collaborative overlap, and backchannel overlap,

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allowing more precise interpretations of interactional meaning. This refinement is particularly pertinent for analysing the Chomsky–Foucault debate, where overlaps may simultaneously signal intellectual rivalry and mutual engagement.

In sum, post-2021 conversation research provides both the theoretical grounding and methodological tools necessary to examine overlapping talk as a key mechanism of meaning negotiation. Yeomans et al. (2023) offer a comprehensive and practical framework for capturing, structuring, and analysing conversational data, while recent publisher-based studies extend these insights to institutional, political, and philosophical discourse. Building on this literature, the present study positions overlapping talk in the Chomsky–Foucault debate as a corpus-observable interactional resource through which epistemic authority, ideological stance, and meaning are continuously negotiated.

3. Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodological procedures adopted in the study. Guided by a corpus-based CA framework, the study integrates both qualitative and quantitative approaches to investigate overlapping talk in the Chomsky–Foucault debate. By combining turn-level annotation with interactional analysis, the methodology enables a systematic examination of the frequency, distribution, and interactional functions of overlaps.

3.1 Data Collection

The primary dataset consists of the transcript of the 1971 debate *Human Nature: Justice versus Power*, held at Eindhoven University of Technology and moderated by Fons Elders. The debate featured Noam Chomsky and Michel Foucault and has been subsequently published in various formats, including *The Chomsky–Foucault Debate on Human Nature* (1974).

To ensure accuracy and reliability, the transcript was cross-verified against the original audio recording, capturing speaker-specific nuances such as intonation, pacing, and overlap timing. This verification process is consistent with best practices in corpus-based CA, which emphasizes fidelity to naturally occurring interaction (Yeomans et al., 2023; Mondada, 2022).

The dataset was structured to include three participant categories: Chomsky, Foucault, and the moderator, allowing for comparative analysis of overlapping behavior across speakers and roles.

3.2 Corpus Preparation and Data Processing

The transcript was processed through a structured, multi-step pipeline to construct an analyzable corpus suitable for both quantitative measurement and qualitative interpretation. First, all turns were systematically attributed to Chomsky, Foucault, or the moderator using auditory and contextual cues, ensuring accurate alignment between linguistic output and speaker identity, which is essential for interactional analysis (Deppermann & Streeck, 2021).

The transcript was then annotated using established Conversation Analysis conventions to capture fine-grained interactional phenomena. Following Jefferson (2004) and Mondada (2022), the transcription marked overlapping talk, timed pauses, emphatic stress, and repair sequences. These annotations preserve the micro-level detail required to examine how overlaps emerge, escalate, or resolve within unfolding interaction, thereby enabling principled interpretation of interactional functions.

Subsequently, the data were segmented into analytically meaningful units, including individual speaker turns, overlapping sequences, and broader discourse moves. This segmentation allowed

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for precise tracking of temporal alignment and functional variation across interactional events, facilitating systematic comparison between different overlap environments and phases of the debate.

Finally, the corpus was tagged and coded using the UAM Corpus Tool supplemented by Excel-based coding procedures. Each segment was classified into analytically motivated overlap categories, including accidental overlaps, intentional overlaps, recycling overlaps, competitive allocation, and resolving overlaps. Tags were linked to time-stamped concordance lines, allowing the integration of quantitative measures such as frequency and distribution with qualitative, function-oriented interpretation, in line with established CA-based and corpus-assisted interactional research (Schegloff, 2000; Yeomans et al., 2023).

3.3 Analytical Procedures

The analysis was conducted using a dual-level analytical procedure combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. At the quantitative level, frequencies and distributions of overlap types were calculated to identify recurring interactional patterns across speakers and phases of the debate. In addition, temporal sequencing and overlap density were measured to locate moments of heightened interactional tension and increased competition for the floor, allowing for a systematic overview of overlap behavior within the dataset.

At the qualitative level, each overlap instance was examined in its immediate conversational context to determine its interactional function, such as disagreement, agreement, turn negotiation, or the assertion of authority. The analysis followed sequential principles, with overlaps interpreted in relation to preceding and subsequent turns in order to preserve the integrity of the interactional flow. This procedure aligns with core principles of Conversation Analysis, which emphasize the importance of turn-by-turn examination and contextual sensitivity in interpreting talk-in-interaction (Heritage, 2008; Yeomans et al., 2023).

Finally, the identified patterns were cross-referenced with findings from recent conversation-analytic and corpus-based studies on overlap in both institutional and intellectual discourse. This comparative step enabled the positioning of the present findings within contemporary scholarship, facilitating both validation and theoretical extension of existing research on overlapping talk (Mondada, 2022; Li et al., 2022; Boland et al., 2023).

4. Results

This chapter presents the findings of the corpus-based analysis of overlapping talk in the Chomsky–Foucault debate. The results are organized into two sections: (i) quantitative distribution of overlap categories across participants, and (ii) qualitative analysis illustrating the interactional functions of overlapping.

4.1 Quantitative Results

The frequency and distribution of overlap types were calculated for Chomsky, Foucault, and the moderator. Table 1 summarizes the percentage of accidental and intentional overlaps, while Table 2 presents the distribution of recycling, competitive allocation, and resolving overlaps.

Table 1: Distribution of Accidental and Intentional Overlaps

Speaker	Accidental Overlaps (%)	Intentional Overlaps (%)
Chomsky	50.0	16.0
Foucault	50.0	67.0

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Moderator	0.0	16.0

Table 2: Distribution of Recycling, Competitive Allocation, and Resolving Overlaps

Speaker	Recycling (%)	Competitive Allocation (%)	Resolving (%)
Chomsky	43.0	38.0	45.0
Foucault	43.0	44.0	36.4
Moderator	14.3	19.0	18.2

The quantitative analysis reveals a patterned distribution of overlap types across participants, highlighting both symmetry and strategic divergence in interactional conduct. Accidental overlaps were evenly produced by Chomsky and Foucault (50% each), suggesting that moments of simultaneous speech frequently emerged from shared orientation to turn-entry points rather than deliberate interruption. This finding aligns with CA research showing that accidental overlap is a routine by-product of turn-transition relevance places in highly engaged intellectual discourse (Schegloff, 2000; Mondada, 2022).

In contrast, intentional overlaps were markedly more frequent in Foucault's contributions (67%), indicating a stronger use of overlap as a resource for floor-taking and argumentative assertion. This pattern is consistent with observations in institutional and intellectual debates where overlaps function as displays of epistemic authority and challenge (Li et al., 2022; Boland et al., 2023). Chomsky's comparatively lower use of intentional overlap suggests a less confrontational turn-entry strategy, relying more on sequential uptake than interruption.

Recycling overlaps were almost equally distributed between Chomsky and Foucault (43% each), while the moderator's involvement remained marginal. This balance reflects a shared tendency among principal interlocutors to repeat or reformulate talk during overlap to sustain argumentative trajectories, a practice widely documented in dialogic exchanges involving complex ideological positioning (Yeomans et al., 2023). The moderator's limited recycling underscores their institutional role in regulating rather than competing for the floor.

With regard to competitive allocation, both speakers actively contested turn ownership, though Foucault marginally exceeded Chomsky (44% vs. 38%). This supports Mondada's (2022) argument that competitive overlap intensifies in moments of high epistemic or ideological stakes. However, Chomsky's higher proportion of resolving overlaps (45%), compared to Foucault (36.4%), indicates a greater orientation toward restoring interactional order through yielding, pausing, or negotiation. Such resolution-oriented behavior echoes findings in CA studies that associate overlap management with cooperative stance-taking and interactional alignment (Heritage, 2008; Yeomans et al., 2023).

4.2 Qualitative Results

The qualitative analysis moves beyond frequency counts to demonstrate how overlaps operated as interactional resources within the debate. Accidental overlaps largely emerged at transition-relevance places, particularly following the moderator's questions, when both Chomsky and Foucault attempted simultaneous turn entry. These overlaps were brief and typically resolved through immediate yielding, indicating mutual orientation to conversational norms rather than competitive intent. Such patterns reflect routine turn-taking dynamics described in CA literature, where overlap is treated as interactionally non-problematic when rapidly repaired.

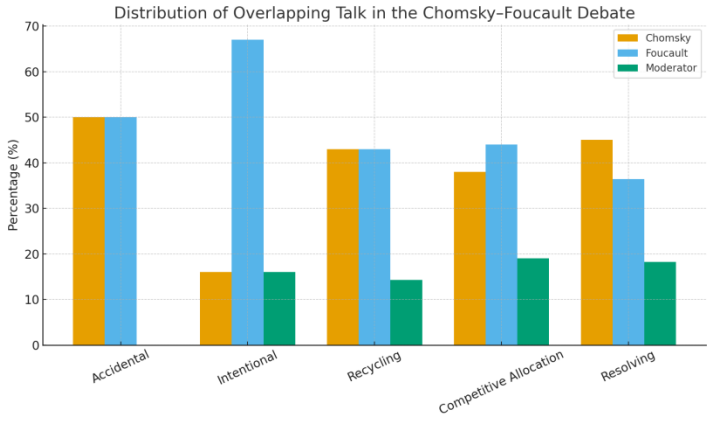
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Intentional overlaps, however, revealed clear asymmetries in discursive strategy. Foucault recurrently used overlap to challenge or interrupt Chomsky's arguments, signaling disagreement and asserting epistemic authority. These overlaps were not merely structural but interactionally meaningful, functioning to disrupt the progression of the prior turn and redirect the argumentative trajectory. This aligns with prior findings that overlaps in intellectual debates often serve as strategic devices for contestation and stance projection.

Recycling overlaps further illustrated how both speakers managed floor control during moments of simultaneous talk. Chomsky and Foucault frequently repeated or reformulated lexical items and clauses while overlapping, thereby maintaining their argumentative line and resisting displacement. Recycling thus functioned as a persistence strategy, enabling speakers to secure continuity of meaning despite interactional pressure, a phenomenon widely documented in studies of sustained disagreement.

Competitive allocation became most salient when the discussion shifted to core philosophical issues, such as human agency. During these moments, overlaps intensified and were prolonged, reflecting heightened ideological stakes. Both speakers deployed competitive overlap to project authority and sustain discursive momentum, reinforcing the adversarial nature of the exchange and confirming that overlap density increases at points of conceptual conflict.

Finally, resolving overlaps revealed contrasting interactional orientations. Chomsky more frequently mitigated overlap through pausing, lowering volume, or explicitly yielding the turn, demonstrating a tendency toward interactional accommodation. Foucault, by contrast, often sustained overlaps for longer stretches, contributing to a more confrontational interactional style. This divergence underscores how overlap management itself becomes an index of stance and interpersonal positioning within high-level intellectual debate.



4.3 Interpretation of Results

The results reveal that overlapping talk functioned as a deliberate interactional resource rather than as accidental interruptions. Foucault's reliance on intentional and competitive overlaps reflects his assertive rhetorical style, marked by attempts to claim discursive power and disrupt the flow in order to reframe arguments. Chomsky, by contrast, used overlaps primarily to resolve conversational dissonance, thereby emphasizing cooperative management of the debate space while still maintaining control of his intellectual contributions. The moderator's limited role

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further confirms their task as a facilitator, maintaining order without altering the argumentative trajectory.

In sum, the debate illustrates that overlap should not be perceived as conversational noise or disruption; instead, it emerges as a strategically functional resource. Through its deployment, speakers negotiated turn-taking, asserted authority, and shaped the dynamic progression of the debate. These findings emphasize the importance of overlap in formal academic exchanges, where it serves both competitive and cooperative functions in sustaining the intellectual dialogue.

5. Discussion

5.1 Accidental Overlaps

Accidental overlaps are instances of simultaneous talk that arise unintentionally at transition-relevance places, typically when more than one participant projects turn completion and initiates speech at the same moment. They are characteristically brief, non-competitive, and resolved without repair or disruption to the turn-taking system, thereby reaffirming participants' shared orientation to conversational orderliness (Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974; Schegloff, 2000). In the Chomsky–Foucault debate, such overlaps occur predominantly after moderator turns, a structurally vulnerable position long recognised in institutional discourse (Atkinson & Heritage, 1984). Critically, their recurrence demonstrates that even high-stakes intellectual debate remains governed by the same procedural norms of turn allocation found in everyday interaction, challenging assumptions that elite academic discourse is interactionally exceptional.

Example 1

"**well** let me begin in a slightly technical way" (5:13)

UAM functional tags: *Accidental overlap; Turn-entry marker; Mitigation*

This overlap occurs immediately following the moderator's question and is marked by the discourse particle *well*, which functions as a soft turn-entry device. Critically, rather than exploiting the overlap to claim the floor assertively, the speaker signals hesitation and alignment with cooperative turn-taking norms. The overlap thus lacks interactional aggressiveness and is resolved smoothly, reinforcing Schegloff's (2000) observation that such overlaps are treated by participants as interactionally unproblematic. Functionally, this suggests that the speaker prioritises procedural legitimacy over rhetorical dominance, positioning intellectual authority as emerging from orderly participation rather than interruption.

Example 2

"**well if you permit** i will answer in french because my english is so bad…" (9:36)

UAM functional tags: *Accidental overlap; Politeness strategy; Face-mitigation*

Here, the overlap is embedded within a hedged request (*if you permit*) and accompanied by self-deprecating justification. Critically, this construction reframes the overlap as a deferential appeal rather than a competitive incursion. Drawing on Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness framework, the speaker mitigates the potential face threat associated with simultaneous talk, thereby neutralising any perception of interactional violation. This supports findings from institutional and political discourse where speakers use politeness resources to legitimise turn-entry during overlap (Adda-Decker et al., 2008). Functionally, the overlap serves less as a turn-claim and more as a negotiation of participation rights.

Example 3

"**perhaps** i can try to react to those comments **within my own framework**…" (26:43)

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UAM functional tags: *Accidental overlap; Modalisation; Metadiscursive framing*
This instance is marked by epistemic modalisation (*perhaps*) and explicit metadiscursive framing (*try to react*), both of which index tentativeness and openness to turn negotiation. Critically, these linguistic choices actively downgrade the speaker's epistemic authority at the point of overlap, signalling readiness to yield if necessary. Such behaviour aligns with overlap resolution strategies characteristic of institutional talk, where speakers display sensitivity to interactional symmetry and shared floor rights (Heritage & Clayman, 2010). Functionally, the overlap operates as a provisional bid for the floor rather than an assertion of dominance, reinforcing its accidental and non-competitive status.

5.2 Intentional Overlaps

Intentional overlaps are deliberate intrusions into an ongoing turn, strategically produced to claim the floor, contest prior talk, or redirect the interactional trajectory. Unlike accidental overlaps, they occur away from transition-relevance places and are interactionally motivated rather than structurally induced (Schegloff, 2000; Kurtic, Brown, & Wells, 2013). In argumentative institutional contexts, such overlaps function as key resources for negotiating epistemic rights and discursive authority (Chowdhury, 2015). In the Chomsky–Foucault debate, intentional overlaps reveal asymmetrical interactional strategies, particularly in how speakers manage disagreement and control thematic progression.

Example 4

"**i think** in part we're slightly talking in cross purposes…" (22:22)

UAM functional tags: *Intentional overlap; Epistemic stance marker; Topic reframing*
This overlap is strategically inserted mid-turn, indicating deliberate interruption rather than coincidental simultaneity. Critically, the epistemic hedge *i think* does not weaken the interruption; instead, it legitimises the speaker's right to intervene by presenting the overlap as a rational clarification. The phrase *talking in cross purposes* functions as a metadiscursive reframing device, redirecting the debate away from the prior line of argument. Comparable reframing overlaps have been observed in political interviews, where speakers use interruption to recalibrate agenda and redefine relevance (Adda-Decker et al., 2008). Functionally, this overlap asserts epistemic authority while maintaining a veneer of analytical neutrality.

Example 5

"where **perhaps** i don't completely agree with mr chomsky…" (31:08)

UAM functional tags: *Intentional overlap; Disagreement marker; Mitigation*
Although softened by the modal *perhaps*, this overlap performs explicit disagreement and is interactionally competitive. Critically, mitigation here operates not to reduce confrontation but to manage its interpersonal consequences, allowing the speaker to interrupt while preserving academic decorum. This co-occurrence of hedging and interruption exemplifies what Chowdhury (2015) terms *controlled competition*, where speakers balance civility with assertive stance-taking. Functionally, the overlap enables the speaker to pre-empt the completion of the prior turn, signalling that disagreement is sufficiently consequential to warrant immediate intervention.

Example 6

"**no** i'm not making a problem out of a personal question…" (32:51)

UAM functional tags: *Intentional overlap; Direct negation; Epistemic authority*

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This overlap is marked by the unmitigated negation *no*, which directly counters the prior speaker's interpretation. Critically, the absence of hedging distinguishes this instance from more moderated overlaps, positioning it as a forceful assertion of epistemic control. As Schegloff (2000) notes, such assertive overlaps function to reassert interactional authority and resist attribution of unintended meanings. Functionally, the overlap halts the progression of the prior turn and reclaims interpretive ownership, reinforcing the speaker's dominance at a moment of interactional tension.

5.3 Recycling Overlaps

Recycling overlaps involve the repetition or reformulation of lexical, semantic, or syntactic material during overlapping talk. Rather than functioning as interruptions or challenges, their primary interactional role is to preserve floor ownership and ensure argumentative continuity under conditions of potential competition (Jefferson, 1986; Schegloff, 2000). In extended explanations and multiparty intellectual exchanges, recycling serves as a pre-emptive strategy whereby speakers stabilise their turn against possible intrusion (Çetin & Shriberg, 2006). In the Chomsky–Foucault debate, recycling overlaps are especially salient at moments of conceptual elaboration, where speakers are engaged in refining abstract theoretical claims.

Example 7

"it is **a new grid** that masks certain things while allowing for the appearance of new knowledge" (21:32–21:40)

UAM functional tags: *Recycling overlap; Lexical repetition; Conceptual elaboration*

This instance demonstrates lexical recycling through the reiterated metaphor *grid*, which anchors the speaker's theoretical framework. Critically, the repetition does not escalate interactional competition but instead consolidates conceptual coherence during overlap. By recycling the key metaphor, the speaker signals continued epistemic ownership of the argument while guiding the audience's interpretive focus. Comparable patterns have been identified in academic discourse, where repetition functions to reinforce key constructs rather than to contest interlocutors (Goźdź-Roszkowski, 2013). Functionally, the overlap enables the speaker to maintain the floor without invoking overtly competitive strategies.

Example 8

"**this inductive leap** would certainly be quite impossible…"

"then **the inductive leap from data to knowledge**… would be impossible" (27:32–27:43)

UAM functional tags: *Recycling overlap; Semantic reformulation; Argument refinement*

Here, the speaker engages in semantic recycling with minor syntactic variation, reformulating the same propositional content to achieve greater precision. Critically, this overlap reveals how recycling operates as a self-repair mechanism that strengthens argumentative clarity while simultaneously securing turn continuity. From a corpus-informed perspective, such reformulations are characteristic of overlap management in extended explanatory sequences, particularly when speakers anticipate possible interruption (Çetin & Shriberg, 2006). Functionally, the overlap allows the speaker to resist displacement while incrementally sharpening the analytical claim.

Example 9

"**creativity only becomes possible thanks to a system of rules**"

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"**freedom can only be exercised thanks to a system of regularity**" (30:49–31:02)
UAM functional tags: *Recycling overlap; Parallelism; Ideational progression*
This example illustrates recycling through parallel syntactic structure and semantic equivalence. Critically, the shift from *creativity* to *freedom* represents not repetition for its own sake but strategic re-articulation, enabling the speaker to extend the argument across related conceptual domains while maintaining control of the floor. The overlap thus functions as a mechanism of ideational progression rather than confrontation. Collectively, such recycling overlaps underscore how speakers in high-level intellectual debate secure discursive space through continuity-building strategies rather than overt interruption, reinforcing the non-adversarial yet assertive nature of their interactional conduct.

5.4 Competitive Allocation

Competitive allocation refers to overlaps in which speakers actively contest floor ownership during moments of ideological disagreement. These overlaps are strategically timed, interactionally marked, and oriented toward dominance rather than coordination (Shriberg et al., 2001; Chowdhury, 2015). In the Chomsky–Foucault debate, competitive overlaps frequently occur at peaks of argumentative tension, reflecting how speakers leverage interruption to assert epistemic authority and influence the trajectory of discussion. Critically, such overlaps reveal not only disagreement but also the procedural tactics speakers employ to claim interpretive and discursive control in constrained institutional settings.

Example 10

"**i would like to know whether one cannot discover the system of regularity… outside the human mind**" (31:21–31:27)
UAM functional tags: *Competitive overlap; Interrogative challenge; Epistemic positioning*
Although framed as a question, this overlap functions as a direct theoretical challenge. Critically, the interrogative form masks assertiveness, enabling the speaker to contest the prior turn without overtly violating conversational norms, a strategy common in institutional and intellectual debate (Atkinson & Heritage, 1984). Functionally, the overlap asserts epistemic authority by prompting the interlocutor to justify their position, effectively combining floor reclamation with argumentation. It demonstrates that competitive overlaps can be masked rhetorically while still performing high-stakes interactional work.

Example 11

"**i don't agree one wages war to win not because it's just**" (56:30)
UAM functional tags: *Competitive overlap; Explicit disagreement; Assertive stance*
This instance exemplifies unmitigated, forceful disagreement, highlighting competitive overlap at a peak argumentative moment. Critically, the absence of hedging contrasts sharply with accidental overlaps, reflecting deliberate floor contestation rather than coincidental simultaneous speech. Such assertive interruptions function to foreground the speaker's interpretive authority and challenge the opposing epistemic stance (Heritage & Clayman, 2010). Functionally, the overlap emphasizes argumentative dominance, signaling both ideological resistance and interactional control.

Example 12

"**well you see i think that in the intellectual domain of political action…**" (45:38)

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UAM functional tags: *Competitive overlap; Discourse marker; Floor reclamation*
The discourse marker *well you see* signals the speaker's effort to reclaim momentum following critique. Critically, this overlap combines mitigation (*i think*) with assertive positioning, reflecting a nuanced strategy to regain control while maintaining interpersonal decorum. Such overlaps align with patterns in political and institutional talk, where speakers employ subtle markers to negotiate authority and re-establish argumentative footing (Heritage & Clayman, 2010). Functionally, the overlap operates as both a corrective and a strategic repositioning, reinforcing the speaker's claim to discursive leadership.

5. Resolving Overlaps

Resolving overlaps are interactional strategies through which speakers mitigate competition, yield the floor, or restore orderly turn-taking following simultaneous talk. These strategies often involve agreement, evaluation, hedging, or topic transition (Schegloff, 2000; Brown & Levinson, 1987). In the Chomsky–Foucault debate, resolving overlaps highlight how speakers navigate tension while maintaining collaborative engagement, balancing epistemic assertion with interpersonal management. Critically, these moves reveal the interplay between dominance and cooperation, showing that even assertive intellectual interlocutors invest in managing turn-taking to sustain mutual intelligibility.

Example 13

"**i think that's correct and illuminating…**" (23:44)

UAM functional tags: *Resolving overlap; Positive evaluation; Affiliative strategy; Hedge (epistemic stance)*
The positive evaluation *correct and illuminating* operates as an affiliative move that simultaneously acknowledges the prior turn and signals floor yielding. Critically, this overlap illustrates strategic mitigation: the speaker validates the other's point to reduce potential conflict while asserting alignment. This aligns with Brown and Levinson's (1987) positive politeness strategies, showing how overlap resolution is not merely procedural but also socially calibrated. Functionally, the move restores conversational order while sustaining epistemic credibility.

Example 14

"**i would certainly agree with that not only in theory but also in action…**" (41:08)

UAM functional tags: *Resolving overlap; Explicit agreement; Turn repair; Floor restoration*
Explicit agreement here closes the overlap sequence, restoring orderly turn-taking. Critically, the phrase *not only in theory but also in action* strengthens the affiliative impact, demonstrating that overlap resolution can simultaneously reinforce credibility and maintain relational harmony. Such strategies are characteristic of institutional discourse, where speakers must manage the tension between argumentative engagement and procedural decorum (Heritage & Clayman, 2010). Functionally, this overlap ensures continuity and smoothes potential interpersonal friction.

Example 15

"**perhaps it is interesting to go on a little bit further on this problem of strategy…**" (47:47)

UAM functional tags: *Resolving overlap; Hedge; Topic shift; Transition marker*
The hedge *perhaps* and the topic-shifting formulation facilitate a transition from the previous overlap to a new segment of discussion. Critically, this illustrates how speakers use hedging and discourse markers to manage interactional closure, signaling that the prior contention has been addressed and the floor can safely move forward. This aligns with Schegloff's (2000) assertion

that overlap resolution is an interactional achievement requiring sensitivity to timing and turn ownership. Functionally, the overlap simultaneously signals closure and prepares the conversational environment for continued argumentation.

6. Conclusion

This study investigated overlapping talk in the 1971 Chomsky–Foucault debate using a corpus-based CA framework, combining quantitative frequency analysis with qualitative functional interpretation. The results indicate that overlaps were not random interruptions but systematically organized and interactionally meaningful features of the debate. Foucault predominantly employed intentional and competitive overlaps to challenge Chomsky's arguments and assert discursive authority, while Chomsky relied more on resolving overlaps, using strategies such as turn-taking repair, hedging, and agreement to maintain coherent dialogue. The moderator, by keeping overlap minimal, reinforced their role as a neutral facilitator, ensuring orderly conversational flow. Collectively, these findings demonstrate that overlapping talk functions as a strategic resource, shaping both the negotiation of meaning and the exercise of intellectual authority in high-stakes discourse (Schegloff, 2000; Jefferson, 1986; Mondada, 2022).

This study has several theoretical implications. It extends the scope of CA research by examining overlap in an intellectually charged debate, an area underexplored in previous studies focused on informal conversation or institutional settings (Mondada, 2022; Yeomans et al., 2023). The findings reinforce Jefferson's (1986) and Schegloff's (2000) claims that overlapping speech is purposeful and patterned, while highlighting its role in enacting authority, managing disagreement, and navigating ideological tension. Overlap, therefore, operates not only as a mechanism for turn-taking but also as a rhetorical strategy for negotiating influence in formal academic exchanges.

From a methodological perspective, the integration of corpus-based tools with manual CA coding demonstrates the value of mixed methods in analyzing conversational dynamics. Quantitative measures of frequency and distribution, combined with qualitative functional analysis, provide replicable and nuanced insights into how overlaps contribute to interactional outcomes. This approach offers a model for future CA studies, emphasizing both rigor and interpretive depth (Boland et al., 2023; Yeomans et al., 2023).

This study also offers practical implications for communication studies, debate training, and professional interaction. Understanding how overlaps can be used to assert dominance, sustain interaction, or manage disagreement equips educators, communicators, and negotiators with strategies for effectively navigating high-stakes discussions. Such insights are particularly valuable for settings where authority, expertise, or ideological positions are actively contested.

Despite its contributions, the study has limitations. It focuses on a single debate, limiting the generalizability of findings. Additionally, it primarily analyzes verbal overlaps, without incorporating multimodal features such as gesture, gaze, or prosody, which are known to interact with speech in regulating turn-taking and signaling stance (Mondada, 2022).

Future research should address these limitations by analyzing multiple intellectual debates across cultural and linguistic contexts, incorporating multimodal data, and exploring overlaps in digital or hybrid debate environments. Such studies would provide a richer, more holistic understanding of how overlapping talk is produced, managed, and resolved in formal interactions.

In conclusion, overlapping talk emerges as a deliberate and strategic feature of interaction rather than a conversational accident. In the Chomsky–Foucault debate, overlaps served as both a site

of contestation and collaboration, illustrating how speakers negotiate meaning, assert authority, and manage discourse flow. This study underscores the broader significance of CA for understanding language in intellectual and social life, highlighting the utility of corpus-based approaches for capturing the complex interplay between structure, function, and rhetoric in formal dialogue.

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