

**ETHNOGRAPHY OF SPEAKING AND ETHNOMETHODOLOGY**

Different ways of using language in different societies -- study the examples on pp. 242-245:

!Kung  
Western Apache  
Puliyane  
Aritama  
Danes  
Roti  
Antigua  
Subanon  
etc.

THERE IS A NEED FOR A FRAMEWORK TO CONDUCT  
SYSTEMATIC STUDIES ON HOW PEOPLE OF DIFFERENT  
CULTURAL BACKGROUNDS USE LANGUAGE.

The ethnography of speaking (ES) studies language use as displayed in the daily life of particular speech communities.

(“*ethnography of speaking*” is often referred to by the term “*ethnography of communication*”).

ES obtains and interprets information by learning the ways of communicating appropriately in a community.

Its theoretical contributions are centred around the study of  
“SITUATED DISCOURSE”



linguistic performance as the locus of relationship between *language*  
and *socio-cultural order*.

ES studies what is accomplished through speaking and how speech is related to and is constructed by particular aspects of social organization.

Typical questions asked by ES researchers:

- a. What is the goal of speech in this particular case?
- b. What is the relevance of the particular linguistic code to the social/cultural context?
- c. What is the relationship of one particular interaction to other similar acts, performed by the same speakers or to other speech events observed in the same community?

What is the relationship between the *ethnography of speaking* and *sociolinguistics*?

ES research has been criticized for putting too much emphasis on ritualized speech or formal events.

BUT: ES should be considered to be related to, but distinct from sociolinguistic research.

HYMES: “communicative competence”

ES *does* contribute to research on communicative competence: its focus of investigation is on the *predictable structure of verbal performance* in the conduct of social life.

What is the difference between *ES approach* and *pragmatic analysis*?

(Pragmatics: The study of how context affects linguistic interaction).

ES approach:

- stronger concern for the socio-cultural context of the use of language;
- stronger interest in clarifying the relationship between *language and local systems of knowledge and social order*.
- lesser commitment to the relevance of logical notations to the strategic use of speech in social interaction.

ETHNOGRAPHY OF SPEAKING: Analysis of all factors that are relevant to understanding how a communicative event achieves its objective.

HYMES (1974):

“speaking” (acronym) pp. 247-248)

Setting and Scene

Participants

Ends

Act sequence

Key

Instrumentalities

Norms of interaction and interpretation

Genre

Speaking is a complex activity: “skilled work”

ETHNOMETHODOLOGY (see definitions on p. 252)



THE FOCUS IS ON:

- a. COMMONSENSE KNOWLEDGE
  - b. PRACTICAL REASONING
- } pp. 254-255

Examples: pp. 255-257

ES and ETHNOMETHODOLOGY share their methodological approach in that both give priority to explaining the *knowledge* of members of a culture, the *unstated assumptions of which determine their interpretation of experience*.

Difference between ES and ETHNOMETHODOLOGY:

ES: the basis of situated discourse is *shared knowledge of a social /cultural order* → MORE STATIC APPROACH!

ETHNOMETHODOLOGY: The basis of situated discourse is the *shared rules of interpretation of social /cultural order*.



MORE DYNAMIC APPROACH!

“ETHNOMETHODOLOGY” -- refers to the interpretive processes used by *researchers and subjects alike*; it is more than the way in which a speech act is studied: it is *part of what there is to study* as well.

Implicit in this claim is an understanding that speaking has a form beyond that of grammar: members of a community share knowledge of *ways of speaking*; communication requires sociolinguistics as well as semantics.

Speaking is never simply recognition of shared contents of rules: It is always open-ended, because participants bring it above as their “artful accomplishment” (Garfinkel, 1972).

Garfinkel argues that utterances of speakers are “indexical glosses”: it is not possible to specify the meaning independently of a particular occasion of its use.

Further, the meaning of an utterance may change as the conversation proceeds.

Problem: If meaning is bound up with occasions of use, and if utterances are “indexical glosses”, how do we analyze conversations?

The ethnomethodologist’s solution is to change the analytic focus from “what is being talked about” to *the ways, the methods* speakers employ to remedy the essential indexity of speech.

## CONVERSATIONAL ANALYSIS (CA)

CA is concerned with speech interaction.

### PREMISES:

- independence of turn-taking systems from the socio-cultural context of speech
- the relevance of socio-cultural context should only be taken note of by the analyst when it is being made explicit by the participants in the conversation.

CA claims that ‘problems’ and ‘solutions’ speakers encounter in conversations can be described without referring to socio-cultural contexts.



This implies moving towards a more “autonomous” approach, one that is shared by formal linguists.

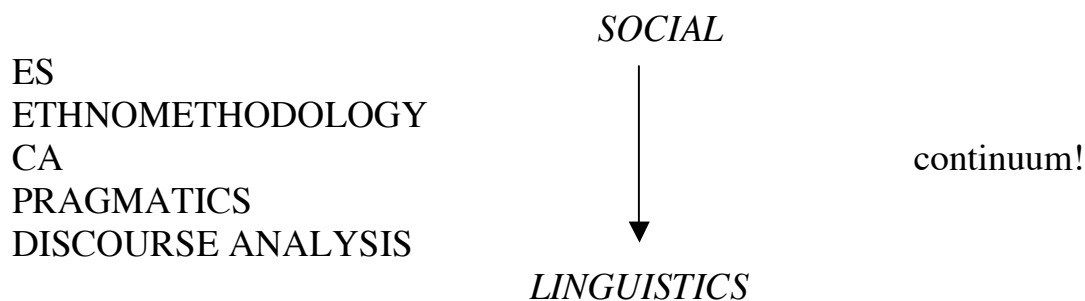
Both CA and generative grammars claim that STRUCTURAL RELATIONSHIPS and DEPENDENCIES AMONG SPEECH FORMS can be studied separately apart from the social setting they occur in.

BUT: CA shares with ES and ETHNOMETHODOLOGY a concern for the participants’ point of view (“orientation”).

The difference between CA and ES and ETHNOMETHODOLOGY is that for CA the *interaction* is the only legitimate source for analysis (= what occurs in the interaction is important);

ES and ETHNOMETHODOLOGY:

in addition to the actual interaction, aspects of social identity of the speakers’ history are also important factors and are *legitimate sources* for analyzing the interaction.



ES and Ethnomethodology are at about the same point of this continuum, but they employ *different methodology*!

Conversational analysts agree on two points:

1. The use of actual spoken dialogue as data
2. Importance of transcription

There are two distinct approaches to CA:

1. Sequentially accountable approach:

- focuses on a few sequences of talk and aims to account for the way in which each utterance fits into its texts

(Labov & Fanshel. 1977. *Therapeutic discourse: psycho-therapy as conversation*)

2. Distributionally accountable approach:

- focuses on multiple sequences and aims to account for why a particular feature occurs in texts in general

(Schiffrin, D. 1980. *Meta-talk: organizational and evaluative brackets in discourse*)

Ethnomethodologists argue against focusing on particular linguistic items wherever they occur: ...“for in so doing there is always a danger of presuming in advance that some particular word ... will invariably have the same interactional implications whenever and wherever it occurs.” (Atkinson & Heritage. 1984. *Structures in social action: Conversation Analysis*.)

Thus:

Instead of focusing on a limited number of sequences, ethnomethodologists search for ways in which a particular task is accomplished across a wide range of sequences.

Ethnomethodologists do <i>not</i> seek generalizations about the function of a particular form; they <i>do</i> seek generalizations about <i>how</i> a particular function is fulfilled by a diversity of forms.
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