




**Note that this particular corner of the site is constantly being revised.**  
**End of the present round of works: January, 2003. Delays possible.**  
*Most recent update undefined*

## What is meant by "discourse analysis"?

One starting point is the following quotation from M. Stubbs' textbook (Stubbs 1983:1), in which discourse analysis is defined as (1) concerned with language use beyond the boundaries of a sentence/utterance, (2) concerned with the interrelationships between language and society and (3) as concerned with the interactive or dialogic properties of everyday communication.

 The term discourse analysis is very ambiguous. I will use it in this book to refer mainly to the linguistic analysis of *naturally occurring connected speech or written discourse*. Roughly speaking, it refers to attempts to study the organisation of language above the sentence or above the clause, and therefore to study *larger linguistic units*, such as conversational exchanges or written texts. It follows that discourse analysis is also concerned with *language use in social contexts*, and in particular with *interaction* or dialogue between speakers.

Discourse analysis does not presuppose a bias towards the study of either spoken or written language. In fact, the monolithic character of the categories of speech and writing is increasingly being challenged, especially as the gaze of analysts turns to multi-media texts and practices on the Internet. Similarly, one must ultimately object to the reduction of the discursive to the so-called "outer layer" of language use, although such a reduction reveals quite a lot about how particular versions of the discursive have been both enabled and bracketed by forms of hierarchical reasoning which are specific to the history of linguistics as a discipline (e.g. discourse analysis as a reaction against and as taking enquiry beyond the clause-bound "objects" of grammar and semantics to the level of analysing "utterances", "texts" and "speech events"). Another inroad into the development of a discourse perspective is more radically antithetical to the concerns of linguistics "proper". Here the focus is on the situatedness of language use, as well as its inalienably social and interactive nature - even in the case of written communication. Coming from this end, the sentence/clause as a primary unit of analysis is dislocated irredeemably and "moving beyond the sentence" becomes a metaphor for a critique of a philological tradition in which the written has been reified as paradigmatic of language use in general. In this version, discourse analysis foregrounds language use as social action, language use as situated performance, language use as tied to social relations and identities, power, inequality and social struggle, language use as essentially a matter of "practices" rather than just "structures", etc. Not surprisingly, there is a point where discourse analysis as an inroad into understanding the social becomes a theory which is completely detached from an empirical engagement with the analysis of language use. Note that I do not wish to argue against this latter possibility. To do that would mean that one misses out on a number of important philosophical and social-theoretical debates and developments of the post-war period.

Discourse analysis is a hybrid field of enquiry. Its "lender disciplines" are to be found within various corners of the human and social sciences, with complex historical affiliations and a lot of cross-fertilisation taking

place. However, this complexity and mutual influencing should not be mistaken for "compatibility" between the various traditions. Nor is compatibility necessarily a desirable aim, as much is to be gained from the exploration of problematical and critical edges and from making the most of theoretical tensions. Traditions and crossover phenomena are best understood historically - in antagonistic terms and as subject to internal developments.

- In some cases one can note independent parallel developments in quite unrelated corners of the academic landscape. For instance, models for the study of narratives developed simultaneously
  - within literary studies - cf. the narratological theories of A. Greimas, V. Propp and G. Genette
  - within sociolinguistics - cf. W. Labov's work on the structural components of spoken narratives based on a functional classification of utterance types; the sequential formula obtained as a result reads that a narrative minimally involves 'an orientation', 'a complicating action' and 'a resolution'; one or more 'evaluations' may occur in between and a narrative may also be preceded by 'an abstract' and concluded by 'a coda'.
  - within conversation analysis where narratives are seen not so much as structural realisations, but as interactive accomplishments which involve audience uptake and the negotiation of an "extended, monological" turn in conversational talk - cf. the work of Harvey Sacks.
  - within ethnopoetics where oral narratives are seen as characterised by poetic forms of patterning and as a resource with a socio-cognitive function - cf. the work of Dell Hymes.
- Note also that the borrowing discipline has sometimes been responsible for the success of certain thematic developments. For instance, speech act theory originated within analytical philosophy, but its popularity has been largely due to developments within linguistic pragmatics. Its reception within linguistic anthropology has been different from that in European linguistics. There is also further lineage. Speech act theory also features prominently in recent debates about performance and the production of social relations (e.g. in the work of Judith Butler) and had been introduced earlier into literary criticism through the work of scholars such as Marie-Louise Pratt.
- Not surprisingly, a lot of research nowadays can no longer be situated neatly within the received academic disciplines (linguistics, sociology, psychology, anthropology, etc.) and researcher affiliations are often determined more by accidental conditions of employment in a particular academic unit than by a singular disciplinary orientation within the research which is done.



Finally, note that the list below is ordered alphabetically. It does not presuppose a ranking in terms of importance.

1. Analytical philosophy
  - Speech act theory
  - Principles of information exchange
2. Linguistics
  - Structuralist linguistics
  - Register studies and stylistics
  - Text Linguistics
  - Pragmatics
    - Presuppositions
    - Face and politeness
    - Reference
3. Linguistic Anthropology
  - Ethnography of speaking
  - Ethnopoetics
  - Indexicality
  - Interactional Sociolinguistics
  - Natural Histories of Discourse
4. New Literacy Studies
5. Post-structuralist theory
  - M.M. Bakhtin
6. Semiotics and cultural studies
  - Semiotics and communication studies
  - Cultural studies
7. Social Theory
  - Pierre Bourdieu
  - Michel Foucault
  - Jürgen Habermas
8. The sociology of order in interaction
  - Erving Goffman
    - Interaction order
    - Frame analysis
    - Footing
    - Face
  - Conversation analysis
  - Ethnomethodology
9. Acknowledgements




## LIST OF REFERENCES

### 1. The "natural language school" within analytical philosophy


The term "natural language school" refers to a particular tradition in analytical philosophy which is characterised by a belief in the possibility to formulate the conditions for a logical, truth-yielding language on the basis of the study of meaning in natural language (as opposed to, artificial or mathematical languages). Note that at that juncture in the history of Anglo-American philosophical writings, philosophy saw its *raison d'être* in the development of adequate instruments for scientific enquiry rather than in terms of tackling the great moral-ethical and social issues of the time. Somewhat ironically, it was precisely the search for the "true scientific utterance" which lay at the root of speech act theory, the theory which foregrounds the social actional aspects of all language use and, by doing so, has arguably rendered void all subsequent attempts to formulate the conditions for a type of speech which would be purely truth-oriented.







**Speech act theory (Austin, Searle):** It was the particular search for the (purely) **constative** (utterances which describe something outside the text and can therefore be judged true or false) which prompted John L. Austin  to direct his attention to the distinction with so-called **performatives**, i.e. utterances which are neither true or false but which bring about a particular social effect by being uttered (e.g. "With this ring I thee wed" - by speaking the utterance you perform the act). For a performative to have the desired effect, it has to meet certain social and cultural criteria, also called **felicity conditions**.


Further on in his essay, Austin abandons the distinction between constatives and performatives and replaced it by (i) a new distinction between three different "aspects" of an utterance against the background of (ii) a generalised claim that all utterances are really performatives. This generalised claim is the key assumption of speech act theory (the theory of "how to do things with words"), viz. by making an utterance, language users perform one or more social acts. These are called 'speech acts'. The threefold distinction is that between different types of action. For instance, by speaking an utterance (**locution**), you may perform the social act of making a promise (**illocution** - what the speaker does by using the utterance) and, as a result, convince your audience of your commitment (**perlocution** - what the speaker's done, having made the utterance).

An number of further important elaborations of speech act theory lie in the work of John Searle. One is that he allocates a central place to **communicative intentions** (this is based on the assumption that a speaker has wants, beliefs and intentions which are indexed in the performance of utterances). At the same time, he develops a typology of speech acts, which for him, is rooted in the range of illocutionary verbs that occur in a given language ([Click](#)  for an overview of speech act categories in British English). A third contribution of Searle is the development of a theory of **indirect speech acts**. This concept is based on the observation that by uttering, say, what appears to be a statement (e.g. "It's hot in here."), language users often indirectly perform another type of illocutionary act (in the case of the example: voice a request to open the window).

 /  The undeniable merit of speech act theory lies in advancing a view of language use as action. In Searle's words (Searle 1969:17)



[A] theory of language is part of a theory of action, simply because speaking is a rule-governed form of behaviour. Now, being rule-governed, it has formal features which admit of independent study. But a study purely of those formal features, without a study of their role in speech acts, would be like a formal study of the currency and credit systems of economies without a study of the role of currency and credit in economic transactions. A great deal can be said in the study of language without studying speech acts, but any such purely formal theory is necessarily incomplete. It would be as if baseball were studied only as a formal system of rules and not as a game.

Yet, already in Searle's elaboration of the theory, there is an asocial, mentalist turn in the characterisation of intentions as mental states stripped of all social content. At one point, Searle (1983:11 ) even states that the state of intentionality is "a biological phenomenon and is part of the natural world like any other biological phenomenon". [Linguistic anthropologists](#) have criticised the

universalistic claims of Searlean versions of speech act theory, showing its limited applicability to non-Western modes of communication (e.g. drawing attention to discourse types which exclude any kind of intention as in John Du Bois' studies (e.g. Du Bois 1993) of oracles among the Azande (Sudan) and the Yoruba (Nigeria); see also Alessandro's Duranti's work (e.g. Duranti 1993) on the Samoan conception of meaning which holds speakers responsible for the social consequences of their acts of speaking rather than for intentions ascribed to them). However, such a critique requires an elaboration in its own right to the extent that it is based on assumptions of cultural uniformity at the expense of variability and contradiction. Thus, as Verschueren (1985) notes, depending on the data context examined, speakers of English can be seen to hold conceptualisations of speech actions rather similar to those invoked by linguistic anthropologists to bring out ethnocentric bias. Lack of situational diversification equally underlies critiques of speech act theory coming from [conversational analysts](#): can speech acts be identified at all independently of the interactional sequences in which the utterances occur. One of the central problems which is indeed raised by an "antipersonalist" critique of speech act theory is whether the speaking subject can be seen as the origin of meaning, as is presupposed by the centrality of the concept of communicative intentions. The latter is in some respects a result of speech act theory's roots within analytical philosophy, which has tended to rely on a rational view of a "whole" subject which is seen as the source of social action (compare also with [Michel Foucault's](#) insistence on a reversal of the speaker-utterance relationship). Compare, finally, also with debates over whether illocutionary force is a matter of speaker intention (as in Searle's version of speech act theory) or of hearer interpretation (as is more or less presupposed in Austin's stress on hearer uptake - e.g. recognising an utterance as a command, else it cannot have that force). Some researchers now tend to stress that speaker intention is really a matter of conventionalised interpretations associated with particular moves in specific situations of language use.

■ The strict separation between locution and illocution in Austin's work can be criticised from within Derrida's writing. This criticism has a bearing on important debates within linguistics. First, for the act of speaking (locution) to be valid as a locution, an utterance must be grammatical and draw on a recognisable lexical wordlist. In this reading, a locution has meaning independently of the context in which it is used. Using the utterance in context amounts to lending it a particular force (illocution). In contrast with this view, one can argue that utterances tend to pre-empt a particular context of use as well as stress the extent to which "constatives" exist by virtue of "performatives". As Defoort (1996: 61 and 75 - my translation) explains

📖 Derrida calls Austin's claims original, but they cannot be called conclusive. According to Derrida, the force of an utterance is already there in the locution and we never succeed in strictly separating force from meaning: meanings have force and forces have meaning. Although this discussion is not developed explicitly in *Signature Événement Contexte*, it is presupposed like a running thread through the text. It constitutes an irreversible turn in Derrida's thinking.

[...]

Throughout history philosophers - Austin included - have searched for pure locution. They appear to show an unconditional, almost innate respect for the neutral representation of reality. They regret the existence of forces which can only distort this representation. Austin does criticise the preference which this tradition has always had for "assertions" which can be expected to be true or false in their reflection of reality, but even he could not distance himself from the concept of "pure locution" and its representational function. This explains why he felt it necessary to secure a separate place for the idea of "locution".


That this debate is not simply an academic exercise becomes clearer when one considers its consequences for the projection of the illocution/locution-distinction on a division of labour between "semantics" (focusing on the meaning of utterances - seen out-of-context) and pragmatics (the use to which utterances are put in context). Derrida's account begs the question whether there can still be room for a semantics which is not pragmatics?

■ Finally, as Jaworski and Coupland (1999:16 📖) point out, the aim of laying down the felicity conditions for all illocutionary verbs in English comes with a risk of arbitrary essentialism, if it means that the contextual variability which is inherent in the actual social conditions under which particular speech acts are performed is disregarded (cf. [ethnography of speaking](#)'s warning against premature "closure" in the relationships between contextual and textual categories).



👉 **The study of principles for the exchange of information (Grice):** The work of the philosopher H.P. Grice 📖 is mostly associated with the theory of the *cooperative principle* and its attendant maxims which together regulate the exchange of information between individuals involved in interaction. Grice's endeavour has been to establish a set of general principles, with the aim of explaining how language users communicate indirect meanings (so-called *conversational implicatures*, i.e. implicit meanings which have to be inferred from what is being said explicitly, on the basis of logical deduction). The cooperative principle is based on the assumption that language users tacitly agree to cooperate by making their contributions to the talk as is required by the current stage of the talk or the direction into which it develops. Adherence to this principle entails that talkers simultaneously observe 4 *maxims*:

- *quality*, i.e. make your contribution truthful and sincere.
- *quantity*, i.e. provide sufficient information.
- *manner*, i.e. make your contribution brief, present it in an orderly fashion and avoid unambiguities.
- *relation*, make your contribution a relevant one.

There are various conditions under which these maxims may be violated or infringed upon. One of these is instrumental to the explanation of how implicatures are being communicated. For instance, when a speaker blatantly and openly says something which appears to be irrelevant, it can be assumed that, if the talkers continue to observe the CP, s/he really intends to communicate something which is relevant, but does so implicitly. ([Click](#)  for a few examples)


■ The major weakness in Grice's theory is probably that it paints a rather rosy picture of the social conditions of communication. Although he admits that there are many situations in which speakers do not cooperate, the theory nevertheless sees cooperation as the universal cement in social transactions. This way Grice also glosses over obvious and less obvious differences in power and status between interactants (See also [Pierre Bourdieu](#)).

■ A second weakness is undoubtedly that Grice's scheme requires a symmetry in background knowledge between the talkers for it to explain the successful transmission of implicatures. If the speaker's premises for logical deduction are different from the hearer's, the hearer may infer something which was not intended by the speaker or only approximates it. Is it justified to assume the existence of such a high degree of symmetry? Probably, not. Hence, one may have to think of introducing a theoretical distinction between implicatures 'as intended by the speaker' and implicatures 'as recognised by the hearer and attributed to the speaker'. However, the concept of [sequential implicativeness](#) (see [conversational analysis](#)) offers an outcome here. Each turn in a conversation counts as a particular interpretation of the turn immediately before it. This gives the talkers the chance to update their knowledge of their co-interlocutor's background assumptions and thus 'restore' a certain degree of symmetry. Additionally, there is the routine aspect and repeatable nature of lots of exchanges. This makes the communication and interpretation of implicatures fairly conventional and predicable. Nevertheless, it is instructive not to underestimate the impact of asymmetries on the exchange of information (both with respect to what is being talked about and with respect to what speaker and hearer assume about each other's orientation towards the exchange of information - e.g. goals of the interaction, stakes within the interaction, degrees of expected cooperation, etc. - compare with [interactional sociolinguistics](#)).






[\(back to list\)](#)


## Linguistics

 **Structuralist linguistics:** To the extent that structural linguistics has developed into the study of language use (rather than the linguistic system), nowadays often making use of large corpora of texts for studying the distribution of particular structures and uses, it can be said to have developed a discourse analytical perspective.




 **Register studies and the study of stylistic variation** are based on the observation that language variation depends not only on the social position and geographic origins of the speakers (traditionally the concern of variationist sociolinguistics), but that language use also varies according to the activity in which one is engaged (e.g. giving a sermon, writing up a research article, addressing parliament, etc.). **Diatypic variation** of this kind is grasped through the notion of *style* (Crystal & Davy 1969 ) or, within the systemic-functional framework, *register* (Halliday et al. 1964, Halliday 1978, Halliday 1985 ). "Register" can be decomposed into

- *medium* used (e.g. written, spoken, spoken-to-be-written, written-to-be-cited)
- *field of activity* (e.g. science, religion, law) and
- *tenor* - the social role relationships which obtain between the language users in a particular situation (e.g. teacher-pupil, preacher-congregation, parent-child).

■ Certainly in the Crystal & Davy-type of stylistics, language use is seen as an effect of contextual variables - a trait shared with a lot of work in variationist sociolinguistics. This leaves little room for a view in which language use also contributes to the creation of context (e.g. becoming a police suspect usually begins with being addressed in an interrogative, sincerity-doubting mode). Compare with [post-structuralist theory](#), [conversation analysis](#), [linguistic anthropology](#) and more recent versions of the social semiotic model within systemic functional linguistics (e.g. Martin 1985 ).



 **Text linguistics:** Early text linguists concentrated on the development of various paradigms for the study of how sentences interconnect. They have drawn attention to the various linguistic devices that can be used to ensure that a text "hangs together" (cf. the concept of *textual cohesion*). Such devices include the use of articles, lexical repetition and personal pronouns to refer back to entities mentioned earlier in a text and the use of linking words to establish a particular logical relationship of, say, contrast, concession or addition between two or more sentences in a text. Other types text linguistic themes include:

- developing a **typology of text types** (esp. written text types). The most commonly known classification is that typological variation can be reduced to 5 functional types: *argumentative*




*texts, narrative texts, descriptive texts, expository texts* and *instructive texts*. In some versions of this theory, the 5 types tend to be viewed as *textualisation-strategies*. It is not uncommon for a single text to incorporate parts which fall under different functional headings (for instance, a novel may consist of descriptive, narrative and argumentative episodes; a newspaper editorial is likely to contain narrative and argumentative parts).

- the study of how sentences functionally interrelate within particular *rhetorical schemata* (e.g. types of textual sequencing such as *top-down* and *bottom-up* methods of proceeding. An example of the former is a sequence consisting of "general claim > specific application > listing arguments > giving examples". An example of a bottom-up way of proceeding is "example > analysis > next example > analysis > conclusion").




**Pragmatics**, as a sub-discipline of linguistics, can be said to thematise the relationships between language use and the language user in a situational context (cf. the adjective "pragmatic" refers to the capacity of a social actor to adjust to situational circumstances). Initially, pragmatics was mainly bracketed by [analytical philosophy](#), as the first themes it developed were indeed [speech act theory](#) and the study of [principles of information exchange](#). Since, however, a number of further thematic strands have been added, with a certain amount of import from sociology:



- **The study of presuppositions.** The pragmatic interest in the implicit meaning dimensions of language use has been extended to include meanings which are logically entailed on the language user by the use of a particular structure. Presuppositions are implicit meanings which are subsumed by a particular wording in the sense that its interpretation is conditional upon the tacit acceptance of the implicit meaning (cf. *pre-supposition* = "an assumption that comes before"). For instance, a sentence such as "The Cold War has ended" presupposes that the existence of the entities it refers to, in this case the "Cold War". The study of presuppositions therefore often concentrates on meaning dimensions which are "taken for granted" in an utterance or a text and hence this area of pragmatic research offers an instrument which is well-suited for examining the links between language and ideology ([Click](#)  for an example analysis).




- **Face and politeness phenomena:** The pragmatic interest in the communication of indirect speech acts, in particular, as well as the interest in the social-relational aspects of and constraints on [information exchange](#), more generally, are at the basis of an interest in face and politeness phenomena. One entrance to the study of politeness phenomena can indeed be built around the observation that language users often depart from the conditions of optimal information exchange because, not to do so, would amount to a loss of (speaker or hearer) face. For instance, a "white lie" can be described as a linguistic strategy in which a speaker

intentionally and covertly violates the [maxim of quality](#) so as to "spare the feelings" of the person s/he addresses or in order to save one's own face. It is on the basis of observations like the above that some pragmaticists have proposed to complement Grice's CP and its four maxims of information exchange with a [politeness principle](#) and attendant maxims ([Click](#)  for a schematic overview). Taking a slightly different route, one can similarly that an indirectly formulated request such as (son to dad) *are you using the car tonight?* counts as face-respecting strategy, among other reasons, because it leaves room for the interlocutor to refuse by saying *sorry, it is already been taken* (rather than the more face-threatening *you may not use it*). In that sense, speaker and hearer face are being attended to.


By far the most influential theory of politeness phenomena is that of P. Brown and S. Levinson, Their theory is based on a particular interpretation of the work of the sociologist, [E. Goffman](#), on the role of "face" in social interaction (Brown & Levinson 1987:63):

- Our notion of 'face' is derived from that of Goffman and from the English folk term, which ties up face notions of being embarrassed or humiliated, or 'losing face'. Thus face is something that is emotionally invested, and that can be lost, maintained or enhanced, and must be constantly attended to in interaction. In general, people cooperate (and assume each other's cooperation) in maintaining face in interaction, such cooperation being based on the mutual vulnerability of face.


According to P. Brown & S. Levinson, one can subsequently distinguish between two types of face wants: [positive face](#) and [negative face](#). Positive face refers to the desire to be appreciated as a social person. Negative face refers to the desire to see one's action unimpeded by others. Corresponding to these two face-types, language communities develop strategies to attend to positive and negative face wants. These strategies are referred to as [positive](#) and [negative politeness strategies](#). With particular reference to negative face wants, Brown & Levinson have developed the concept of a [face threatening act](#) to refer to verbal acts which intrinsically threaten face and may therefore require face-redressive action ([Click](#)  for a schematic overview of available options) . According to Brown & Levinson, there is a direct correlation between the amount of face work speakers perform and particular situational variables: (a) power, (b) social distance and (c) the gravity of the imposition (cf. a request to borrow someone's car usually involves more face-work than a request to use that person's pencil).

■ Brown & Levinson predominantly see face wants in individualistic terms. Their speaker is a rational model person, who, when interacting, adopts rational goals of which she is conscious. The underlying assumption is that the behaviour of interactants displays a sensitivity towards a satisfaction of mutual face wants. In contrast, one may stress the situational diversification of systems of politeness as well as their conventional nature. See, for instance, [Bourdieu](#) who sees politeness in terms of conventions. These reflect the determinate nature of power relations of a society. Subscription to these conventions counts as an act of political concession. Compare also with critiques of [speech act theory](#).

■ Brown & Levinson are preoccupied with “losing face”, but there is hardly an equivalent discussion of “gaining face”. This choice of metaphor has been criticised as ethnocentric.

■ The relevance of "face" in interactional analysis can be extended beyond Brown & Levinson's particular utterance-oriented interpretation of it. Suggestions for this can be found in [Goffman's own work](#). In addition, one can think here of situations where speakers enter into confrontations with institutions in order to (re)claim certain entitlements. In terms of scope, this takes us beyond a pre-occupation with the "local" face-related dimensions of individual utterances towards a more "global" analysis of the face work dimensions of complete exchange sequences or encounters, especially disputes (see Sarangi & Slembrouck 1997 )



- The study of **reference** is essentially a pragmatic theme. The focus is on how speakers establish various types of linkage between their utterances and elements in a situational context (e.g. objects, persons, etc.). One central question is the functioning of **deictic elements**, sometimes called **shifters** (i.e. lexical items such as "I, you, here, now, there, tomorrow, etc." whose referential meaning shifts with every new speaker or occasion of use). Within a [linguistic anthropological](#) strand of enquiry, deixis is viewed as fundamentally challenging the view of language as a self-contained, autonomous system, since the presence of deictic elements ties up an utterance with contextually variable factors and such can even be argued to affect the meaning of other lexical items in the co-textual vicinity (see Duranti & Goodwin (1992b:43-4 ) for a lucid argumentation to this effect).




[\(back to list\)](#)

---

3.

## Linguistic anthropology

Linguistic anthropology is a cover term for mainly Northern American approaches which contextualise language use in socio-cultural terms. According to Hymes (1964:xxiii)

-  its scope may include problems that fall outside the active concern of linguistics, and always it uniquely includes the problem of integration with the rest of anthropology. In sum, linguistic anthropology can be defined as the study of language within the context of anthropology.

Linguistic anthropology's origins lie in the wider anthropological concerns with indigenous peoples, societies and cultures in the United States, Canada, Meso-America and also farther away. Although its ancestry is in what was initially a US government-funded programme of documentations and descriptions of (mainly) American Indian indigenous languages, myths and historical narratives, linguistic anthropology, in its present form, is the result of a "paradigmatic shift" established in the 1960s (see [ethnography of speaking](#) and [interactional sociolinguistics](#)). In Duranti's (2001:5) words,

❏ [...] linguistic anthropology as it is practiced today [...] is also more than grammatical description and historical reconstruction, and it is also more than the collection of texts, regardless of whether those texts were collected in one's office or under a tent. It is the understanding of the crucial role played by language (and other semiotic resources) in the constitution of society and its cultural representations.

Nowadays, many linguistic anthropologists have a double agenda:

- a premium on **ethnographic fieldwork and description** among indigenous peoples which continue to provide credentials for academic community membership, but with a shift towards **contemporary situations of contact** (with governments, other communities, private companies, bureaucratic institutions, etc) focusing on the role of language in the formation of communal identities, literacy projects, language rights movements, in a wage-labour economy, in struggles over economic resources, etc. As an illustration consider Collins' (1998:259) characterisation of his own work among the Tolowa in Northern California in terms of a double shift in perspective:

❏ to move away from "salvage linguistics" that documents for science another dying language, while trying to understand what losing a language means for those who face that loss; to move away from a "salvage ethnography" that analyses memory culture, while trying to understand current social dynamics against the backdrop of long-announced and externally perceived cultural death.



In quite a number of cases, this shift in perspective has foregrounded inequality, power relationships and (language) ideologies - also in the sense of raising issues of appropriation and entitlement in the contact situation between linguistic anthropologist and researched communities.

- A commitment to the study of **language use as situated - institutionalised - practice** (for instance, A. Duranti's work on council meetings in Western Samoan villages) and often this is not restricted to "indigenous" contexts (for instance, E. Mertz's work on the contextualisation of legal precedents in US law school classroom discourse as providing critical moments in professional socialisation; another example would be S. Philips, who has published both on linguistic standards of evidentiality in US criminal courts and on judicial practices in Tonga). In this respect, it is true to say that much work in linguistic anthropology has a discourse analytical and/or a pragmatic orientation.


Finally, note that linguistic anthropology (including [interactional sociolinguistics](#)) is not to be confused with variationist sociolinguistics. Although at one point, Hymes and [Gumperz](#) included Labov's work on language change in the emerging discipline called "ethnography of communication"


(using even "sociolinguistics" as a synonym), the two have clearly gone separate ways since the mid-80s. The variationist method is rather exclusively quantitative. It is positivist and tends not to be informed by anthropological theory (e.g. ethnography). Sociological variables such as class, gender, race, etc. tend to be treated as independent situational variables (rather than as culture-specific and situationally-contingent constructs).





 **Ethnography of speaking** develops out of a wider appeal (in the mid 1960's) for "studies that would analyse in detail how language is deployed as a constitutive feature of the indigenous settings and events that constitute the social life of the societies of the world", as anthropological linguistics could "no longer be content with analysing language as an encapsulated formal system that could be isolated from the rest of a society's culture and social organisation." (Duranti & Goodwin 1992a:1 )).


First of all, some notes on *ethnography*. Ethnography is a principal mode of anthropological enquiry, but there is no unified conception of it. According to Alessandro Duranti (1997:84-5), ethnography is first of all a method. It offers a set of valuable techniques with allows researchers to connect linguistic forms with cultural practices. Its integration within other methods for the documentation of speech patterns sets linguistic anthropologists aside from other researchers into language and communication:



 As a first approximation, we can say that an ethnography is the written description of the social organisation, social activities, symbolic and material resources and interpretative practices characteristic of a particular group of people Such a description is typically produced by prolonged and direct participation in the social life of community and implies two apparently contradictory qualities: (i) an ability to step back and distance oneself from one's own immediate, culturally-biased reactions so to achieve an acceptable degree of "objectivity" and (ii) the propensity to achieve sufficient identification with or empathy for the members of the group in order to provide an insider's perspective."


However, ethnography can also be captured as a particular research ethos (in the sense that expertise in it is generally assumed to come with accumulated experience in fieldwork) with rather far-reaching theoretical implications (in the sense that it presupposes a particular epistemological orientation). One common tenet is undoubtedly the need for involved participation and distanced observation as starting points for all analysis. In Hymes' (1980 ) view, ethnography can be characterised as **an interactive-adaptive method of enquiry**. It


- involves training in the accumulated comparative knowledge of a subject
- is based on a desire to be comprehensive (i.e. characterised by a systematic interest in a wide range of related ways of life)
- may well be topic-driven
- prioritises comparative and contrastive analysis
- must lead to hypothesis formation and ultimately generalisation
- is open-ended and subject to self-correction during the enquiry


Note that Hymes links the latter with a general mission of anthropology, expressed in terms of a desire to "overcome the limitations of the categories and understandings of human life that are part of single civilisation's partial view" (1980:92 ). Note that he also formulates the validity of ethnographic insights in terms of accurate knowledge about the meaning of particular behaviours, objects, institutions for those who participate in it. Ethnography, in Hymes' view, is essentially a participant-driven approach but it would be a mistake to assume that it is based on an illusory metaphor of pure induction: "[T]he more an ethnographer knows on entering the field, the better the result is likely to be" (1980:92 ; compare with [some versions of conversation analysis](#)). Ethnography is perhaps best thought of as an epistemology which constantly moves between what is local/specific and the general, between knowledge already acquired and new data. Nor does ethnography exclude critical concerns. Consider in this respect also Hymes (1980:100):


 It [Ethnography] is a mode of enquiry that carries with it a substantial content. Whatever one's focus of inquiry, as a matter of course, one takes into account the local form of general properties of social life - patterns of role and status, rights and duties, differential command of resources, transmitted values, environmental constraints. It locates the local situation in space, time, and kind, and discovers its particular forms and center of gravity, as it were, for the maintenance of social order and the satisfaction of expressive impulse.


 Ethnography stresses the necessity of knowledge that originates in participation, ordinary communication and observation. This provides a major point of discontinuity with many European traditions in discourse analysis - at least to the extent that the latter show a tendency to isolate textual material as "objects" for analysis, drawing reifying boundaries around it. Instead, ethnography values a careful treatment of context (the explicitation of context itself is an epistemological problem), insisting that it is impossible to separate speech data from the history under which it was obtained (see also [natural histories of discourse](#)). As Scheper-Hughes (2000:132 ) points out,


 the question often posed to anthropologist-ethnographers about the dangers of 'losing one's objectivity' in the field is really quite beside the point. Our task requires of us only a highly disciplined subjectivity".

 Ethnography stresses connections between sites and media of discourse, in ways which encourage a participant-oriented rather than a more narrowly text-oriented approach to "meaning". Consider in this respect Hymes (1980:95):


 A key to the significance of a type of television programme may not be in the amount of time the family set is on, but in the family pattern of speaking around it. Is the set on, but ignored? Does someone insist on and get silence? Is the program essentially a resource for continuing conversation?


 In a programmatic vein, ethnography - as it presupposes a dialogic situation of contact as its primary locus for research activity - also carries with it the potential for helping to overcome divisions of society into those "who know" and "those who are known". Because it presupposes an inversely-oriented pair of asymmetries (the ethnographer will be "one-up" on accumulated scientific expertise

but will be "one-down" on insiderness - especially in the early stages, and, vice versa, the informant may acquire scientific expertise in the course of the research), ethnography is arguably better-suited for critical research with interventionist and emancipatory ambitions than critical paradigms which are based exclusively on a knowledge-based advantage of the researcher when it comes to determining foci, priorities and desirable goals (see also Slembrouck 2001 ). The "learning" aspect also sets ethnography apart in terms of how one determines what needs to be researched. Agar (1996: 119-120, 126) elaborates the latter point in the general context of "hypothesis-testing":

 It's not necessarily that ethnographers don't want to test hypotheses. It's just that if they do, the variables and operationalisations and sample specifications must grow from an understanding of the group rather than from being hammered on top of it no matter how poor they fit. [...] things like the learning role, the long-term intensive personal involvement and the holistic perspective are what set ethnography apart - they enable us to learn what people are like rather than seeing if a minute piece of their behaviour in a context we define supports or does not support our ideas of the way they are like."

+ Finally, ethnography raises issues of representation, in a way which problematises the relationship between "scientific" and "everyday" modes of representing categories, relationships, connections, etc. Note in this respect (Hymes 1980:98):

 The general problem of social knowledge is two-edged: both to increase the accumulated structural knowledge of social life, moving from narrative to structurally precise accounts, as we have commonly understood the process of science, and to bring to light the ineradicable role of narrative accounts. Instead of thinking as narrative accounts as an early stage, we may need to think of them as a permanent stage, whose principles are little understood, and whose role may increase. [...] If narrative accounts have an ineradicable role, this need not be considered a flaw. The problem is not to try to eliminate them, but to discover how to assess them. [...] The question of narrative brings us to another aspect of ethnography. It is continuous with ordinary life.

***Ethnography of speaking*** offers a radically descriptive orientation for the accumulation of data on the nature of *ways of speaking* within speech communities. Hymes' own formulation of the project is really a preliminary listing of fundamental notions and concepts that must be addressed within an adequate descriptive theory for sociolinguistic enquiry. As he puts it, "what is presented here is quite preliminary [...] one might call it 'toward toward a theory'. Some of it may survive the empirical and analytical work of the decade ahead." (Dell Hymes, 1972:52 ). This looseness, I think, is best understood in terms of drawing attention to relevant concepts that were around at the time, stressing the potential connections between them, but also in terms of not pre-empting the outcomes of empirical and analytical work still to be undertaken. However, as a theoretical position, Hymes' project singles out diversity of speech as the hallmark of sociolinguistic enquiry (1972:39).

- Underlying the diversity of speech within communities and in the conduct of individuals are systematic relations, relations that, just as social and grammatical structure, can be the object of qualitative enquiry. A long-standing failure to recognise and act on this fact puts many now in the position of wishing to apply a basic science that does not yet exist.

[...]

A general theory of the interaction of language and social life must encompass the multiple relations between linguistic means and social meaning. The relations within a particular community or personal repertoire are an empirical problem, calling for a mode of description that is jointly ethnographic and linguistic.

A brief and extremely cursory overview of the fundamental notions which Hymes lists:

- Ways of speaking** is used as the most general term. It is based on the idea that communicative conduct within a community entails determinate patterns of speech activity. The communicative competence of persons comprises knowledge with regard to such patterns.
- The term **fluent speaker** draws attention to differences in ability, as well as the need to describe normative notions of ability. Different communities can be expected to hold differing ideals of speaking for different statuses, roles and situations (e.g. they may be based on memorisation, improvisation, quality of voice, etc.).
- Speech community** is a primary concept which postulates the unit of description as a social, rather than a linguistic entity. Rather than start with a "language", one starts with a social group and then begin to consider the entire organisation of linguistic means within it. A speech community is defined tautologically (but radically!) as a community which shares knowledge of rules for the conduct and interpretation of speech.
- Speech situation** are activities which are in some recognisable way bounded or integral. They may have verbal and non-verbal components. They may enter as contexts into statements of rules of speaking (e.g. as an aspect of setting - see below), but they are not in themselves governed by such rules throughout.
- The term **speech event** is restricted to (aspects of) activities which are directly governed by rules or norms for the use of speech, with the speech act as the minimal term in the set - for instance, a party (speech situation), a conversation during the party (speech event), a joke within the conversation (speech act).
- Sixteen **components of speech**:

<b>Settings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ setting</li> <li>■ scene</li> </ul>	<b>Key</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ key</li> </ul>
<b>Participants</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ speaker, sender</li> <li>■ addressor</li> <li>■ hearer, receiver, audience</li> <li>■ addressee</li> </ul>	<b>Instrumentalities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ channels</li> <li>■ forms of speech</li> </ul>
<b>Ends</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ purposes - outcomes</li> <li>■ purposes - goals</li> </ul>	<b>Norms</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ norms of interaction</li> <li>■ norms of interpretation</li> </ul>



Act sequences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ message form</li> <li>■ message content</li> </ul>	Genres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ genre</li> </ul>
---------------	---	--------	---

Note that Dell Hymes formulated the so-called *SPEAKING*-framework almost as a footnote, announcing it as a purely mnemonic code word, whose use may have little to do with an eventual theory or model. The grid reformulates the sixteen components, reducing them to the eight letters of the term "speaking".

- **Rules of speaking** refer to the observation that shifts in any of the components of speaking may mark the presence of a rule, a structured relation (e.g. from normal tone to whisper, from formal English to slang, correction, praise, embarrassment, withdrawal, evaluative responses, etc.). Differences in the hierarchy of components are also an important part of the taxonomy of sociolinguistic systems.
- **Functions of speech** may be stable in terms of relationships among components (e.g. in a given period or society, poetic function may require a particular relationship between choice of code, choice of topic and message form). At the same time, Hymes warns that the definition of function cannot be reduced to or derived directly from other components.



## Ethnopoetics

still to be developed



The origins of the concept of **indexicality** lie in Charles Peirce's distinction between three types of sign-based meaning relationships. Unlike *symbols* (characterised by an arbitrary form/meaning-relationships) and *icons* (which reproduce some aspect of a referent), an *index* is characterised by an existential relationship with the referent (classical examples include: smoke indexes fire). The category of signs that function indexically can easily be extended to a range of linguistic expressions such as demonstrative pronouns (e.g. this, that, those), personal pronouns (e.g. I, you, we), temporal expressions (e.g. now, then, yesterday) and spatial expressions (e.g. up, down, below, here) - in short, deictic elements (sometimes called 'shifters') function indexically. The property of indexicality can be argued to extend to much of linguistic communication - as language is full of examples which are "existentially connected" to particular aspects of social and cultural context.

According to Michael Silverstein (1992:55), indexicality can be understood in spatial imagery:


☐ In a topological image, indexicality is by definition what I call a radial or polar-coordinate concept of semiotic relationship: indexical sign-vehicles point from an origin that is established in, by and at their occurring as the here-and-now "center" or tail, as it were, of a semiotic arrow. At the terminus of the radial, or arrowpoint, is their indexical object, no matter what the perceptual and conceptual dimensions or properties of things indexed. Strictly, by virtue of indexical semiosis, the "space" that surrounds the indexical sign-vehicle is unboundedly large (or small), characterisable in unboundedly many different ways, and its indexical establishment (as having-been-brought into being) almost limitlessly defeasible.


+ One strength of the concept of indexicality is undoubtedly that it draws attention to meaning-making processes which in terms of "existential" connections which users definitely make between sign and the social world which they inhabit but which are hard to pin down precisely in terms which allow firm generalisations. In this reading, speech act force assignment can be understood in indexical terms, i.e. as a matter of a situated establishing of a meaning relationship between a particular utterance and a social act that has come into existence (as different from saying: such and such an utterance have such and such a force in a context-independent way - without having to address the question "for whom?"). A similar analytical radicalisation can be claimed for applications of indexicality in the area of code-selection and switching. What is "existentially assumed" (inferred as "social facts") about a speaker when s/he selects a particular code or switches between codes (e.g. display of competence, display of group membership, oppositional alignment, situational conformity, etc.). In as much as it may be difficult for researchers to pin down what exactly is being indexed, it is unmistakably so that something very consequential is being indexed.

+ Duranti (2001:26 ☐) makes the point that Silverstein's concept of metapragmatic awareness provides a framework for thinking about the power of specific linguistic forms to reveal or to hide (from speakers' consciousness) their indexical value. This concept of metapragmatic awareness has its origin in theories of linguistic relativity and its underlying assumption about the unconscious nature of linguistic knowledge. In Silverstein's version, features of language structure can either favour or hinder native speakers' ability to interpret pragmatic value. One point to be made in passing here is that this enables a critique of the use of existing lexicalisations of speech acts for inventory of speech acts in a language (there may be speech act forces which cannot be lexicalised in a speech act force verb). But there is more. Linguists have tended to dismissive of native speakers' failure to distinguish between, say, gender as a part of linguistic structure, and, gender in the sense of particular objects/entities being associated with [+/- (fe)male] as part of a "natural order" in the "world out there". The latter has been seen as folk linguistic reasoning (and intrinsically uninteresting to the student of language - except to raise it in order to demystify it). In Silverstein's view, however, one is interested in how speakers make sense of language use and the world. So, rather than disqualify certain informant perceptions as "folk theory", the interesting question is: why do these perceptions occur and why do they show up in this area? It is indexicality which provides the pivotal concept here. In a view which accepts that cultural categories of experience may be extended to areas where no such linkage can be presupposed, the question how speakers orientate themselves (i.e. "where do speakers establish existentially-informed meaning relationships?") matters more than answering accurately the question "does the category at this point *really* apply?" - in the sense that an answer to the second question should be subsumed in an answer to the first question, rather than being primary.

■ One question which continues to hover around the proliferation of applications of the concept is, of course, what are the limitations of the concept?





 According to John Gumperz (Gumperz 1999:453-4), the **interactional sociolinguistic** method originated in a criticism of earlier attempts in the ethnography of communication which explained cultural diversity in terms of differences between bounded language-culture systems. Instead, interactional sociolinguistics has its origins in

-  the search for replicable methods of qualitative sociolinguistic analysis that can provide insight in the linguistic and cultural diversity characteristic of today's communicative environments, and document its impact on individual's lives.

It focuses on situated behaviour as the site where societal forces and interactive forces merge and it stresses the extent to which such interaction depends on culturally-informed but situated inferential processes which play a role in talkers' interpretative constructions of the kind of activity or frame they are engaged in, of a speaker's intention, of what is required next, etc.

One of the major foci of interactional sociolinguistic enquiry are practices of **contextualisation**. This concept is based on a reflexive notion of context, i.e. context is not just given as such in interaction, but it is something which is made available in the course of interaction and its construal depends on inferential practices in accordance with conventions which speakers or may not share. A crucial role in this is how talkers make available and act upon so-called **contextualisation cues**, which John Gumperz (1999:461) defines as

-  any verbal sign which when processed in co-occurrence with symbolic grammatical and lexical signs serves to construct the contextual ground for situated interpretations, and thereby affects how constituent messages are understood.


Typical contextualisation cues are code switching, style switching, prosodic choices, rhythm, particular lexical or syntactic choices, etc. Gumperz distinguishes between two levels of inferencing: (1) global inferences oriented to the "activity type" (what an exchange is about, what topics can be brought up, what should be conveyed (in)directly, etc.) and (2) local inferences oriented towards "[preference organisation](#)" (what is intended by one particular move and what is what is required by way of response). By focusing on regularities in intercultural and interethnic encounters (especially in institutional contexts of gatekeeping such as selection interviews), interactional sociolinguistics seeks to explain "unwarranted" institutional outcomes in terms of a speaker/listener's failure to recognise or respond to particular culturally-bound conventions of interpersonal communication - for instance, continuing with the example of selection interviews, how differences in discursive behaviour may have informed judgements of ability and how explanations for this have to be sought in, say, an Asian interviewee's failure to contextualise certain prosodic cues in the native English interviewer's questions but also the gatekeeper's failure to anticipate differential contextualisation practices ( [Click](#) here for



an example analysis). This way, interactional sociolinguistics also foregrounds how interpretations of talk are interactionally fed by and feed into larger "macro-communicative" orders. More recent versions of the approach also focus on the role of "ideologies of language" in inferential processes.

+ One of the major strengths of interactional sociolinguistics is its insistence on the occurrence of asymmetries in the communicative background of talkers. It cannot be taken for granted that speakers and hearers share the same inferential procedures or contextualise cues in the same way. Such sharing has to be demonstrated in analysis and one of the main aims indeed is to show how diversity affects interpretation. Compare (and contrast!) with the study of [information exchange](#) in [analytical philosophical traditions](#).

+ A second strength is undoubtedly that, while interactional sociolinguistics takes on board the need to examine in detail the sequential positioning of turns at speaking, it does not share [conversation analysis](#)'s restrictive concern with overt wording.


+ A third (and perhaps the most important) strength lies in its "pivotal" outlook - a concern with micro-processes in a way which can throw light on broader social processes and cultural issues - coupled with a dynamic conception of 'context' which recognises open-endedness and resists a neutralisation of a participant's perspective. The latter is reflected in attendant linguistic anthropological developments of the concept of [\(re\)contextualisation](#). As Silverstein (1992:75) notes:

 [...] the indeterminacies that emerge from a broadened and semiotically systematised understanding of 'contextualisation' [... are ...] consistent with Gumperz' insightful recognition that indeterminacy is a shared dilemma of interactional textuality for both the analyst of and the participant in discursive interaction.

For Gumperz (1992:50 ) , contextualisation cues function [indexically](#) (e.g. they share many of the characteristics of shifters); however, what sets them apart is that they are not necessarily lexically based (e.g. code-switching and prosody signal relational values quite independently of the 'propositional meaning' of particular lexical strings;  [click](#) here for an illustrative analysis).

- One uneasy question which surrounds the interactional sociolinguistic framework is: when observing asymmetries, what is "institutional" and what is "cultural"? For instance, routine organisational or institutional 'knowhow' may be taken for granted by one party but remain unknown to the other.



 **Natural histories of discourse** is a discourse-oriented perspective on the study of culture. In their editorial introduction to the volume with the same title, Michael Silverstein and Greg Urban (1996:2-3) link up the term 'natural histories of discourse' with a focus on

- contextually contingent semiotic processes involved in achieving text - and culture. These are recoverable in some measure only by analytically engaging with textual sedimentations. Each chapter in our collective natural history thus focuses on certain analytic moments in the entextualising/co(n)textualizing process.

The perspective of "natural histories of discourse" takes issue with the anthropological idea of "text-as-culture" to the extent that the latter allows the analyst of culture to extract a portion of ongoing social action and draw a reifying boundary around it, before enquiring into its structure and meaning (cf. the idea that culture is embodied in a set of texts which are handed down from generation to generation). To equate culture with its resultant texts is to miss the point that the thingy-ness of texts is but one stage in ongoing cultural processes and although that thingy-ness may appear to have a quasi-permanent shape (which is by no means always the case), it travels from context to context and as a result, it will enter into new orderings between texts and be surrounded by changed conditions of commentary and explanation. Being sensitive to the natural histories of discourse invites attention to strategies and modes of *entextualisation* (e.g. transcription, copying, paraphrasing, citing, editing, recording in a new medium, etc.) and how these are constitutive of processes of *(re)contextualisation* (i.e. create a (new) context for). Further,

- The perspective of a natural history of discourse raises the question whether there is at all such a thing as text in a durable sense. Consider Silverstein & Urban (1996:4):
  - The image of texts, and also of culture, deriving from this latter insight is one a labile and mercurial insubstantiality, in which the text is figured by its always new and present co(n)text. It seems to lose touch with its past, the past, indeed, becoming a projection from the present. But is text entirely an illusion, like a three-dimensional projection from a two-dimensional image? Does textuality completely efface the traces of its antecedent co(n)texts of figuration?
- In addition to focusing on, say, the recovery of the context in which a text artifact was produced or studying the recovery of an oral performance from text or practices of re-performance, an interest in natural histories of discourse also invites attention to the meta-discursive practices of institutions by focusing, among other things, on how recognised activities involve the insertion of textual artifacts into new contexts. For instance, text-artifacts may be treated as denotationally fixed and as devoid of social interaction (for instance, "reading aloud" exercises in classrooms which are orientated towards the technicalities of pronunciation - see Collins (1996 □)) or, text-artifacts may be presented as having emerged from social interaction and as strategically re-insertable into social interaction under changed contextual circumstances (for instance, in the reading practices advanced in law school setting, focusing on precedents and case histories as contextually-volatile textual artifacts - see Mertz 1996 □)).
- The historical perspective on the nature of discourse encourages analytical self-reflection because it draws attention to the role of transcription, recording and representation practices in the construction of social-scientific truths. Such a reflexive turn in analysis, at the same time, foregrounds the inevitable permutations of "data" against the background of shifting role relationships between researcher and researched. (Compare with [conversational analysis](#) and its "naive" belief in transcription as objective materiality.)

- The notion of 'recontextualisation' can be usefully linked up with [M. Foucault](#)'s concept of an 'order of discourse'. To the extent that people and documents constantly move between situations in an institutional context, 'recontextualisation' permeates all institutional activity. However, the NHD-perspective encourages a reflexive interpretation of this reformulation, i.e. the analysis, interpretation and explanation of institutional practice is in itself a history of x-number of recontextualisations.





[\(back to list\)](#)

---

4.

## New Literacy Studies

**New Literacy Studies** is a cover name for an approach which has developed from the mid-1980s onwards (e.g. Barton 1994 , Street 1993 ) and which links up the study of literacy with a critical analysis of communicative practices - seen as situated social and historical practice. New Literacy Studies is critical of binary (essentialist) dichotomies between spoken and written language use and between oral and literate cultures. It also foregrounds plurality in the occurrence of situated types of literacy. It relies on methods of institutional discourse analysis but it also has something very specific to contribute to this domain:

- A preoccupation with how technologies such as writing, print, audiovisual recording, the Internet, etc. shape discourse practices, with particular emphasis on differences in access and use.
- The need to study also the material aspects of textual practices.
- To bring to analysis a sense of how people actually make use of textual artefacts (how they often do so selectively, in utilitarian and cavalier ways). This entails a move away from a default assumption in which "a complete and exhaustive reading" counts as the "ideal reading" (compare also with [ethnomethodology](#)).
- To thematise the links that exist between practices of language-in-education and socio-cultural understandings of citizenship, political participation and political representation (e.g. extrapolations from technical conceptions of reading and writing to democratic citizenship).



[\(back to list\)](#)

5.

## Post-structuralist theory

**Post-structuralist thinkers** conceive of the social space (organisations, institutions, social categories, concepts, identities and relationships, etc.) and the world of material objects as discursive in nature. This claim, also commonly known as *there is nothing outside the text*, has often been misconstrued, as if it would entail an idealistic denial of the existence of the material world. In the words of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (1985:108):

☐ The fact that every object is constituted as an object of discourse has *nothing to do* with whether there is a world external to thought, or with the realism/idealism opposition. An earthquake or the falling of a brick is an event that certainly exists, in the sense that it occurs here and now, independently of my will. But whether their specificity as objects is constructed in terms of 'natural phenomena' or 'expressions of the wrath of God' depends upon the structuring of a discursive field. What is denied is not that such objects exist externally to thought, but the rather different assertion that they could constitute themselves as objects outside any discursive conditions of emergence.

A second, basic tenet of post-structuralist theory of discourse is that the process of meaning making in relation to people and objects is caught up in an infinite play of "horizontal" difference/equivalence. Meaning is never finally fixed; it is always in an unstable flux.

☐ Laclau and Mouffe challenge the 'closure' of the [structuralist] linguistic model, which reduces all *elements* to the internal *moments* of the system. This [closure] implies that every social action repeats an already existing system of meanings and practices, in which case there is no possibility of constructing new nodal points that 'partially fix meaning', which is the chief characteristic of an articulatory practice.


Thus, the stress on openness is balanced (at least in the work of Laclau and Mouffe and a number of others) by the assumption that objects and social subjects and the relations between them may emerge in partially stable configurations which last for a longer or shorter period of time. Privileged discursive points which partially fix the meaning in a chain of signification are called **nodal points** (Lacan's *point de capiton*, lit: quilting points; in Jacob Torfing's words (1999 ☐, 98-99), points "which sustain the identity of a certain discourse by constructing a knot of definite meanings" - e.g. god, nation, party, class, etc.). Nodal points are capable of concealing ambiguities. They are

☐ **not** characterised by a supreme density of meaning, but rather by a certain emptying of their contents, which facilitates their structural role of unifying a discursive terrain [...] What happens is this: a variety of signifiers are floating within the field of discursivity; suddenly some master signifier intervenes and retroactively reconstitutes their identity by fixing the floating signifiers within a paradigmatic chain of equivalence.

Echoing S. Freud & J. Lacan, this is called the moment of *over-determination* in articulatory practice. The constructions of nodal points which partially fix meaning are crystallised in particular discourses

and this makes social hegemony possible. However, a discourse can never succeed in completely imposing social order and continues to be subvertable by a contingent surplus in meaning outside itself ('a discursive exterior'). Note that Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theoretical model has a political ontology: its teleology centres on an understanding of how historically-specific dislocations 'break' a chain of signification, leading to the undermining/creation of old/new social antagonisms/hegemony in the disruption/establishment of old/new nodal points. Their theory is post-Marxist in the abandonment of class-essentialism and in the recognition of the contingency of social struggles. The openness/partial closure of the social is expressed in terms of a field of tension between meaning fixations and discourses being constantly overflowed by a contingent infinitude of ambivalence.

➤ One of the achievements of post-structuralism is the radical way in which it has placed discourse analysis at the heart of the social-scientific endeavour. Its consequences for disciplines as diverse as anthropology, history, law, social psychology, sociology, etc. have been enormous. For instance, a post-structuralist logic advocates the view that "historic facts" or "legal facts" are discursive constructions. As a consequence, scientific historic writing falls within the scope of, say, narrative analysis, while judicial decisions can be viewed as outcomes of discursive practices which are socio-historically contingent (in this respect, post-structuralism shares a number of characteristics with [conversation analysis](#) and [ethnomethodology](#) - despite obvious differences in the underlying assumptions). Needless to add, a "truth/rationality"-crisis has been one of the effects.

⊖ One of the weaknesses of post-structuralist discourse theory is undeniably its failure to be explicit about how to engage with the analysis of actual instances of text or social interaction-in-context. Note that this is not a straightforward matter of complementing discourse theory with empirical analyses of text and talk. The main challenge here seems to be how to reconcile the need to be explicit about methodology with a non-essentialist and non-positivist view on the production of knowledge. One proposal (Howarth 2000 ) is based on an elaboration of [Michel Foucault's genealogical method](#): to focus on the deconstruction of conditions of possibility of dominant problematisations in a specific socio-political context, in short, an interest in dissolving power/knowledge complexes.

Post-structuralist theory is conventionally (and, at times, almost stereotypically) associated with the work of [Michel Foucault](#), Jacques Derrida and Jacques Lacan. One other name stands out: **M.M. Bakhtin** and he truly deserves a separate website of his own. Although he is not a post-structuralist in the strict sense of the term (his writings date from the first half of the previous century), his work became very influential within Western Europe through the post-structuralist movement (from the late sixties onwards). Key-terms associated with the work of Bakhtin include *dialogicity* and *heteroglossia*. Most important of all is probably his critique of Saussurean linguistics, following from his insistence on a [dialogic view on language use](#).







[\(back to list\)](#)

## 6. Semiotics and cultural studies



**Semiotics and communication studies:** The term semiotics is first of all to be associated with the name of its founding father, F. de Saussure, who argued that language is just one among many systems of signs (e.g. visual forms of communication). Linguistics, therefore, should be seen a sub-discipline of the wider, overarching discipline of semiotics, the science of sign systems. For a number of years, semiotics was largely bracketed by the concerns of departments of communication and media studies (incl. film studies). This is not surprising, as, initially, these were the only academic departments which studied media texts and for whom "visual text" is just as important as "verbal text". The term semiotics also features strongly in the work of the French post-structuralist literary scholar, Roland Barthes, who studied fashion, boxing, etc. as sign systems. Compare also with the work of John Fiske, who, in one of his essays, reads the spacing of "zones" on Cottesloe beach in Western Australia as a text constituted by populations of beach users (families, surfers, nudists, bathers, pet animals, etc.).

+

The neglect of the non-verbal text is one of most blatant shortcomings in 90% of research into language use. A rectification of this situation is urgently called for, if language researchers do not want to be overtaken by history! Semiotics provides one avenue for developing such a programme.



**Cultural studies:** Cultural studies is a vast field. Its origins are usually associated with two founding figures, Raymond Williams and R. Hoggart and their particular angle on the 'high/low culture'-debate in the 1950s. They agreed with earlier views (e.g. T.S. Eliot) that literary criticism can offer a critique of culture in the sense that the culture of a society can be 'read' in a literary critical way, but they disagreed as to the object of enquiry. For Williams and Hoggart, culture should not be restricted to the Great Works of Art. Instead the focus should be on everyday behaviour and expressions - culture "as it is lived". One very important centre of development has been the CCCS (the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Culture Studies, founded by Hoggart in 1964). When Stuart Hall became director in 1972, he gave the centre a new interpretation by introducing the ideas of [French structuralism](#), by relying on a sociological method on enquiry and by linking up CCS with political struggle in the Gramscian sense. CCS is mainly interested in mass culture and consumer society. Its programme can perhaps be captured in terms of a critical and political response to social, economic and political changes in Western, late capitalist societies. For CCS, culture entails the totality of everyday social existence. Its work has been characterised by a strong Marxist and post-Marxist undercurrent (especially the British and the Australian variants) which was pretty orthodox Marxist in Williams' days, explicitly Gramscian in the work of S. Hall and associates, but in other centres also strongly influenced by the ideas of the [Frankfurter Schule](#). Its most salient research themes have been (i) ethnicity and identity (in particular, the "new ethnicities" - e.g. immigrant identities in Britain) and

(ii) an analysis of the 'New Right' - e.g. the transformation of the welfare society in Thatcherite Britain).

+ / - Discourse is central to CCS, but its daily use of the concept is subject to the same restrictions as [post-structuralist theory](#). There has been a lot of (theoretical) work on the discourses of postmodernity, but CCS does not offer a paradigm for text analysis as such. However, there are very intimate ties with [communication studies and semiotics](#) (cf. CCS's interest in popular film). CCS's links with linguistically-oriented discourse analysis are in many respects indirect - giving research a particular orientation and direction and mediating certain key insights. Let me just list a few:

- o the thematisation of ideology as symbolic practice, which paved the way for language/ideology-research (CCS discovered the work of Althusser before linguistics did).
- o In many respects, CCS introduced linguistically-oriented discourse analysis to the work of [M. Foucault](#), for instance, by thematising "new ethnic identities" in terms of "the fragmentation of the self". In the wake of this thematisation, CCS should also be accredited for bringing together ethnic identities, political identities (especially the "new movements") and consumer identities as lying within the scope of one and the same research project. This created room for discourse-oriented sociolinguistic research which focuses on particular institutional sites rather than just particular "ethnic communities".
- o CCS's political analyses of "Neo-capitalism and the new right" (often in combination with other sociological work on post-Fordism, new "workplace orders", globalised capitalism, etc.) have provided a major background for work in critical discourse analysis which concentrates on, say, interaction in a social welfare context, counselling in the workplace, etc.

+ CCS's development of the "multiple, fragmented identities"-theme deserves mention in its own right because it provides an important theoretical correction to certain prevailing assumptions within sociolinguistic research. For instance, in her Lacanian reading of social identity, Angela McRobbie suggests we stress the (negated) "absent" as much as we do the (affirmed) "present". To her, identity is not just a matter of "who/what one is", but also "who/what one is not", "who/what one could be" and "who/what one would like to be".



[\(back to list\)](#)

---


7.


## Social Theory




**Michel Foucault** is often called a philosopher and a social theorist, sometimes a historian and a

literary critic, but also [a post-structuralist thinker](#). One can see these identities merge into a single project, at least, if we can agree to call him "a critical historiographer of the humanist discourses of modernity". For Foucault, the humanist discourses of modernity are knowledge systems which inform institutionalised technologies of power. Foucault's main interest is therefore in the origins of the modern human sciences (psychiatry, medicine, sexuology, etc.), the rise of their affiliated institutions (the clinic, the prison, the asylum, etc.) and how the production of truth is governed by discursive power regimes. The latter, however, should not be understood exclusively in "language"-terms (cf. the attention he pays to the power-dimensions of the ways buildings are designed). Foucault's work can be divided into three stages: [archaeology](#), [genealogy](#) and [post-modern ethics](#). Note that the first two stages involve a metaphoric reading of a particular sub-discipline of history.

- [Archaeology](#). The production of scientific truth cannot be separated from the discourse formations of scientific disciplines (applied by Foucault to psychiatry and the birth of modern medical science). Particularly relevant to discourse analysis is Foucault's insistence on a reversal of the subject-statement relationship: the subject has to conform to the conditions dictated by the statement before s/he can become the speaker of it (in other words, the structures of discourse prevail over human agency). As paraphrased by McNay (1994:49, 

 If there is one approach that I do reject [it is the one] which gives absolute priority to the observing subject, which attributes a constituent role to an act, which places its own point of view at the origin of all historicity - which, in short, leads to a transcendental consciousness. It seems to me that the historical analysis of scientific discourse, in the last resort, be subject, not to a theory of the knowing subject, but rather to a theory of discursive practice.

Some implications of the subject-statement reversal:

- Meaning does not originate in the speaking subject; instead it is governed by the formative rules of discourses. Thus, the speaking subject is "de-centred".
- Social identity is "dispersed". The "whole", "true", "unique" social subject is replaced by a "fragmented" subject which is constituted in the unstable role identities enabled by discursive formations.
- One further implication might be that the acquisition of social identities is a process of immersion into discursive practice and being subjected to discursive practice. For instance, the process of becoming a teacher is a process in which a novice gradually adopts and subjects him/herself to the multiple modes of speaking and writing which are available in the teaching profession. However, as pointed out by McNay (1994:49 

- *Genealogy*. In this second stage of Foucault's work, discourse is put on a secondary plane, as the focus is now on truth/power regimes with particular reference to bodily practices (applied by Foucault to the "objectifying" practices of prisons and the "subjectifying" discourses of sexuality).
  - The body is the inscribed surface of events (traced by language and dissolved by ideas), the locus of a dissociated self (adopting the illusion of a substantial unity), and a volume in perpetual disintegration. Genealogy, as an analysis of descent, is thus situated within the articulation of the body and history. Its task is to expose a body totally imprinted by history and the processes of history's destruction of the body.

Here Foucault (1984:83) moves to the core of the institutionalised power techniques in modern societies, in particular the role of its key "discursive technologies": (i) the "confession" (cf. the salience of counselling & therapy-oriented practices in institutions) and the (ii) "examination" (cf. the salience of all kinds of recordkeeping for different purposes as central to everyday, routine practices and decision-making within modern institutions).

- *An ethics of the postmodern subject*. Especially in the second and third volume of the history of sexuality - "The use of pleasure" and "The care of the self" (as well as in other late essays), Foucault develops an ethical orientation for the postmodern era. It is based on the idea that an analysis of the techniques of domination can be counterbalanced by an analysis of the techniques of the self. McNay (1994:133) writes about this:
  - Through the formation of a 'critical ontology of the self' it is possible to formulate an alternative ethical standpoint from which individuals can begin to resist the normalising force of the 'government of individualisation'. The idea of an ethics of the self redefines Foucault's relation with a tradition of Enlightenment thought which he rereads through the figures of Kant and Baudelaire. From his reinterpretation, Foucault is able to deploy the concepts of autonomy, reflexivity and critique and, thereby, overcome some of what have been regarded as the nihilistic implications of his earlier work on discipline.

As an afterthought, two "facts" about Foucault, which are worth keeping in mind: (i) his rejection of the concept of "ideology" and (ii) his particular perspective on "power".

- Although Foucault is often cited in the context of language/ideology-research, he was extremely sceptical about the concept of *ideology*. His critique centres on the assumption that "ideology critique" (e.g. the laying bare certain naturalised, common sense assumptions as distorted representations which hide class interests) presupposes the existence of an un-ideological, pre-existing truth which is to be situated elsewhere. Such a view is simply ruled out in a theory which sees truth as a product of discourse. In Foucault (1980:118), we read that

□ [T]he problem does not consist in drawing the line between that in a discourse which comes under the category of scientificity or truth, and that which comes under some other category, but in seeing historically, how effects of truth are produced within discourses which in themselves are neither true nor false.

- For Foucault, **power** does not repress or separate the haves from the have-nots. Instead, power produces and its working is "capillary" - using a similar metaphor: it flows through the veins of society, permeating all levels. See, for instance, Foucault (1980:96):

□ Power must be analysed as something which circulates, or rather as something which only functions in the form of a chain. It is never localised here and there, never in anybody's hands, never appropriated as a commodity or piece of wealth. Power is employed and exercised through a net-like organisation. And not only do individuals circulate between its threads; they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power.



From a perspective of language studies, the French sociologist/anthropologist, **Pierre Bourdieu**, is perhaps most readily associated with the key concepts of [linguistic/symbolic capital](#) and [linguistic habitus](#), their positioning in [linguistic markets](#) and their role in the production of communicative legitimacy (with attendant effects of social reproduction, domination, exclusion and situated silencing). This, however, has to be seen as part of a larger project, which his close collaborator, Loïc Wacquant, summarises in terms of overcoming "the antinomy between subjectivist and objectivist perspectives, social physics and social semiology, so as to produce a unified, materialist science of human practice and symbolic power" (2002:53 □).

One of the recurrent themes in Bourdieu's work is that of an enquiry into the social conditions of possibility for particular practices - ultimately part of an enquiry into the production of social distinctions (artistic, cultural, educational, linguistic, related to fashion, etc). When taken to the domain of language study, these questions imply a displacement of an autonomous linguistic object of enquiry, focusing instead on the conditions for the production (and recognition of) legitimate participation, legitimate language and a view in which language use is always invested with value - appropriacy and well-formedness beyond grammatical acceptability (Bourdieu 1984:103-104):

La linguistique le plus avancée rejoint actuellement la sociologie sur ce point que l'objet premier de la recherche sur le langage est l'explication des présupposés de la communication. L'essentiel de ce qui se passe dans la communication, n'est pas dans la communication: par exemple, l'essentiel de ce qui se passe dans une communication comme la communication pédagogique est dans les conditions sociales de possibilité de la communication. [...] [L]a communication en situation d'autorité pédagogique suppose des émetteurs légitimes, des récepteurs légitimes, une situation légitime, un langage légitime.

Il faut un émetteur légitime, c'est-à-dire quelqu'un qui reconnaît les lois implicites du système et qui est, à ce titre, reconnu et coopté. Il faut des destinataires reconnus par l'émetteur comme dignes de recevoir, ce qui suppose que l'émetteur ait pouvoir d'élimination, qu'il puisse exclure 'ceux qui ne devraient pas être là'; mais ce n'est pas tous: il faut des élèves qui soient prêts à reconnaître le professeur comme professeur, et des parents qui donnent une espèce de crédit, de chèque en blanc, au professeur. Il faut aussi qu'idéalement les récepteurs soient relativement homogènes linguistiquement (c'est-à-dire socialement), homogènes en connaissance de la langue et en *reconnaissance* de la langue, et que la structure du groupe ne fonctionne pas comme un système de censure capable d'interdire le langage qui doit être utilisé. [...] Un langage légitime est un langage aux formes phonologiques en syntaxiques légitimes, c'est-à-dire un langage répondant aux critères habituels de grammaticalité, et un langage qui dit constamment, en plus de ce qu'il dit, qu'il le dit bien. Et par là, laisse croire que ce qu'il dit est vrai: ce qui est une des façons fondamentales de faire passer le faux à la place du vrai. Parmi les effets politiques du langage dominant il y a celui-ci: 'Il le dit bien, donc cela a des chances d'être vrai.'

Bourdieu's sociological critique of linguistics entails a threeway displacement of concepts (1976:646):

In place of *grammaticalness* it puts the notion of *acceptability*, or, to put it another way, in place of 'the' language (*langue*), the notion of *legitimate language*. In place of *relations of communication* (or symbolic interaction) it puts *relations of symbolic power*, and so replaces the question of the *meaning of speech* with the question of the *value* and *power* of speech. Lastly, in place of specifically *linguistic competence*, it puts *symbolic capital*, which is inseparable from the speaker's position in the social structure.

One fairly accessible entry into Bourdieu's theory of **capital** has been developed in Bourdieu (1986

). Its starting point is the observation that the social world can be viewed as accumulated history.

Unless one wishes to reduce this history to a series of short-lived mechanical equilibria (in which the actors can be treated as interchangeable), its understanding requires the introduction of the notion of capital and the attendant concept of accumulation. Capital is accumulated labour (in a material form or in an incorporated form). It takes time to acquire but once acquired it can be invested into a new situation - in this respect, it does not matter whether one talks about money or forms of behaviour. Capital is acquired by individual actors and it can be accumulated exclusively: this brings out a dimension of the individual as a strategic player in the social world, acting on perceptions of value, profitability, etc. Capital is also a force which is reflected both in objective structures. It creates a set of conditions embedded in the reality of the social world and it determines the chances of durable success for specific practices within that world. Finally, capital is what makes the societal game into something different from a game of pure chance. Only at the roulette table one comes across a virtual world in which anyone can acquire a new financial and social status overnight in a situation of perfectly equal

opportunity, unhampered by mechanisms of gradual acquisition, profitable investment or conditions of hereditary transfer. In contrast, capital needs to be invested in a particular way, it needs time to become profitable.

Bourdieu's reliance on a framework which revolves around the concept of 'capital' in its various manifestations is not based on a straightforward simile which seeks to explain social processes in education, art, etc. through a logic which in its purest form is to be found in our understanding of economic markets. Quite the contrary, Bourdieu's institution of the concepts of 'social capital', 'cultural capital', 'symbolic capital', etc. is based on a reversal of the reductionism which limits the logic of the markets to what is narrowly economic and which conceives of the artistic, the educational, etc. as 'desinterested'. Bourdieu's point is that one must do theoretical and analytical justice to the diverse forms of capital in their various manifestations (and not just the one which is recognised by economic theory).

□ A particular definition of the economic has been imposed upon economic practices. This definition is a historical invention of capitalism. By reducing the universe of exchange transactions to the exchange of goods which is oriented objectively and subjectively towards a maximisation of profit (i.e. based on (economic) *self-interest*), other forms of exchange have implicitly been defined as non-economic and *desinterested*. [...] In other words, the accomplishment of a so-called science of market laws, which is not even a true science of the economic field (to the extent that it takes for granted as natural the foundations of the order which it purports to analyse, e.g. private property, profit, wage labour, etc.) has prevented the development of a general economy of practices, in which the exchange of commodities is just one specific type of exchange.

Thus, the point about linguistic capital is not only that symbolic exchanges can be compared conceptually to economic transactions, but also that linguistic capital is a field-specific form of capital, which, under certain conditions can be transformed into other forms, while it cannot be reduced to any of these other forms (e.g. linguistic dispositions allow the acquisition of educational qualifications which in their turn will promote access to prestigious jobs with prospects of entry into attractive social networks). Important from a sociolinguistic point of view, are then the processes of control over the value of symbolic resources which regulate access to other social, cultural and economic 'goodies' (Heller & Martin-Jones 2001:2-3 □). In this way, Bourdieu's cautions us against the objectivism of economic reductionism and the subjectivism which reduces social transactions to communicative events:

- As such we must simultaneously hold on both to the idea that economic capital is the root of all other forms of capital and the idea that these transformed, hidden forms of economic capital can never be reduced completely to this definition, because their most specific effects are produced precisely where their rootedness in economic capital is hidden from view (not in the least from their owners) and this, even though only in the last resort, is the foundation of their specific effects. The real logic of capital, transformations of one type into another, and the laws of accumulation to which they are subjected cannot be understood well unless one leaves behind two opposite points of view which are inherently equally limited: *economism* which, because of its final analysis in which all forms of capital are reduced to economic capital, pays insufficient attention for the specific workings of other forms of capital; and *semiologism* (present examples are structuralism, symbolic interactionism, and ethnomethodology), which reduces social exchange transactions to communicative events and ignores the naked fact of universal reduction into the economic.

Perhaps one can conclude that Bourdieu seeks to establish the specificity of non-economic forms of capital by radically applying an analysis of economic capital to it, be it with a focus on sets of perceptual differences (it is the quality of the negation of forms of economic logic which make up the specificity of non-economic forms of capital). These perceptual differences are indeed treated as clandestine apparancies (their apparent character can be exposed through an analysis in terms of economic capital). However, at the same time, they are not treated as redundancies (the workings of, say, social capital cannot be shown or explained unless subjective differences from the logic of economic capital are taken seriously as factors which constitute the difference). For instance, the ways in which cultural capital masks itself is essential to our understanding of it as capital. Note that such an overcoming of a subjectivist/objectivist antinomy is repeated in Bourdieu's definition of habitus.

Through the notion of linguistic **habitus**, Bourdieu, refers to individual differences in practical linguistic competence. Habitus refers to a speaker's competence as a strategic player: their ability to put language resources to practical use but also to anticipate the reception of their words and to profit from this. However, at the same time, habitus is seen as an internalised disposition of objective structures: a system of choices influenced by inherited and accumulated asset structures (e.g. the language brought to school because of one's social background rather than merely a matter of individual aptitude). The formation of a habitus is continually being sanctioned by relative successes/failures in the market of linguistic exchanges. An early formulation of this position (Bourdieu 1976:654) reads:

- Situations in which linguistic productions are explicitly sanctioned and evaluated, such as examinations or interviews, draw our attention to the existence of mechanisms determining the price of discourse which operate in every linguistic interaction (e.g. the doctor-patient or lawyer-client relation), and more generally in all social relations. It follows that agents continuously subjected to the sanctions of the linguistic market, functioning as a system of positive and negative reinforcements, acquire durable dispositions which are the basis of their perception and appreciation of the state of the linguistic market and consequently of their strategies of expression.

Very importantly, the concept of a "habitus" presupposes a theory of linguistic *practice*, rather than a theory of the linguistic *system* (which Bourdieu radically rejects as an abstraction completely detached from the "fields of social action"). Habitus receives multiple definitions: Habitus is discourse adjusted



to a situation, a market, a field. Habitus is capital. Habitus is hexis - it refers to a set of internatilisised bodily dispositions. Habitus is schematic knowledge, because it generates practices and regulates their evaluative reception. Finally, habitus encompasses ethos (cf. Goffman's claim that the interaction order is a moral order).

In Bourdieu's model, all linguistic situations function like **markets**. In 'ce que parler veut dire' (1984:98), he defines discourse through the formula: speaker competence + market = discourse.


Le discours que nous produisons, selon le modèle que je propose, est une 'résultante' de la compétence du locuteur et du marché sur lequel passe son discours: le discours dépend pour une part (qu'il faudrait apprécier plus rigoureusement) des conditions de réception.



Toute situation linguistique fonctionne donc comme un marché sur lequel le locuteur place se produits et le produit qu'il produit pour ce marché dépend de l'anticipation qu'il a des prix que vont recevoir ses produits. [...] Un des grands mystères que la socio-linguistique doit résoudre, c'est cette espèce de sens de l'acceptabilité. Noun n'apprenons jamais le langage sans apprendre, *en même temps*, les conditions d'acceptabilité de ce langage. C'est-à-dire qu'apprendre un langage, c'est apprendre en même temps que ce langage sera payant dans telle ou telle situation.


Thus, discourse here surfaces as a general term for language use when interpreted as linguistic practice adjusted to a market situation. It is defined as language use implicated in an authority/belief-structure.

A few interesting, further implications:

- Given the basic observation that symbolic resources (the ability to mobilise sets of linguistic resources in order to gain legitimate access to discourse situations) are unequally divided over social populations and given that such inequalities are being maintained through mechanisms of successful accumulation (or the lack of it), it need not surprise us that Bourdieu's work is often described as rather (one-sidedly) inclined towards a sociology of self-perpetuating dominance. This impression is fuelled by the attention which he pays to the homogenisation of markets as an important condition for social linguistic dominance. However, one should not forget the many pages he has devoted to mechanisms of crisis in symbolic markets, situations where *le système de crédit mutuel* (the mutual reinforcement of speaker competence, legitimate language and receiver endorsement) collapses as well as his insistence that prevailing habituses will always be the result of specific historical circumstances and therefore be susceptible to change.
- Another trait in the reception of Bourdieu has been to equate the production of legitimate language rather unreservedly with command of the standard language. Even though there are various points where Bourdieu points to the limiting case of 'Il le dit bien, donc cela a des chances d'être vrai' and where successful speech in the linguistic markets of symbolic exchange is equated fully and exclusively with the standard language. First of all, one should note that authorised language use, for Bourdieu, is not the same as standard language use as learned at school, in the sense of explicit knowledge of the grammar and its rules. In many situations, mastery of the standard language will reinforce the effects of authorised language, but it does not follow from that authorised language can be reduced to standard language (for instance, the production of perfectly grammatical sentences is not enough for an economist to be seen to be

speaking authoritatively as an economist. Furthermore, (a) Authority/belief-structures are relative to situations of contact; value has to be enacted and there will be situations where an orientation towards the standard (measured relatively to an audience) counts as sufficient. (b) There are lots of language communities which are divided over what counts as the standard. (c) It is also important to recognise as real such possibilities as trade union leaders who will be keen to avoid overtly correct speech or situations where non-prestigious forms are strategically appropriated so as to promote claims to authenticity and sincerity (cf. "l'acceptabilité sociologiquement définie ne consiste pas seulement dans le fait de parler correctement une langue: dans certains cas, si'il faut, par exemple, avoir l'air un peu décontracté, un français trop impeccable peut être inacceptable" (Bourdieu 1984:123 ). Indeed, the extent to which 'le bien dit' increasingly becomes equated with the speaking 'not so well', the ostensible display of certain dispositions inherited from outside the dominant classes, is a key theme in understanding the contemporary media scene. (d) At the same time, it is also possible to think of certain symbolic markets where recourse to the language of dominant groups is antithetical to situational legitimacy (e.g. how many car owners will trust a mechanic who speaks the standard language impeccably?).

- The effects of social domination are seen as resulting from the effectuation of objective market relations which bear on an actual situation of contact. They do not follow directly nor automatically from the mere possession of symbolic, social or cultural capital. Bourdieu discusses a range of possible relations resulting from contact, including
  - **le franc parler** and its situated silencing (**censure**) in formal situations, that is, 'Ce franc-parler est le parler populaire en situation populaire lorsqu'on met entre parenthèses les lois du marché' (1984:131 ) , but it is important to note that 'le franc-parler existe mais comme un îlot arraché aux lois du marché. Un îlot qu'on obtient en s'accordant une *franchise* [...] [Q]uand elle est affrontée à un marché officiel, elle détraquée'. Situated silencing is thus seen as an inevitable by-product of linguistic legitimacy: 'parler de *légitimité linguistique*, c'est rappeler que nul n'est censé ignorer le loi linguistique [...] Ça veut dire que, s'ils se trouvent en face de Giscard, ils perdront les pédales: que *de facto* leur langage sera cassé, qu'ils se tairont, qu'ils seront condamnés au silence, un silence que l'on dit respectueux.' (1984:132 )
  - limited transposability
  - **hypercorrection**
- Comprehension is not the primary goal of communication. Bourdieu has repeatedly stressed that language users primarily monitor their behaviour in view of achieving strategic outcomes (e.g. to be believed, to be obeyed, to bring about a decision), often at the cost of misunderstandings.

 A speaker's linguistic strategies (tension or relaxation, vigilance or condescension, etc.) are oriented (except in rare cases) not so much by chances of being understood or misunderstood (communicative efficiency or the chances of communicating), but rather by the chances of being listened to, believed, obeyed, even at the cost of misunderstanding (political efficiency or the chances of domination and profit).

This view is diametrically opposed to the one advocated by analytical philosophers, like [H.P. Grice](#), whose models are based on the assumption that speakers' efforts are always minimally geared towards achieving understanding (compare also with [Habermas](#)' distinction between 'strategic' and 'communicative rationality').



**Jürgen Habermas**

still to be developed




[\(back to list\)](#)

---

8.

## The sociology of order in interaction






The writings of the Canadian-born sociologist, **Erving Goffman**, are undoubtedly among the most influential theoretical sources for the study of spoken interaction, but he is not ordinarily ranked among the major social theorists of the past century. When asked for his specific contribution, one reply will consist of a brief list of "powerful" concepts (i.e. [interaction order](#), [frame](#), [footing](#) and [face](#)) but it is equally true that the relevance of Goffman's work for discourse analysis is still in more than one respect left to be explored (for instance, his distinction between the front and back regions of institutional action, cast as a distinction between formal public performance (front region) and more informal back region activity "where the impression fostered by the performance is knowingly contradicted as a matter of course" (Goffman 1959:114 )).

Some of Goffman's writings can be situated in the context of a sociology of psychiatric (and other "total") institutions but conducted against the background of action-oriented descriptions of participant orientations in "normal interactive behaviour" (note that this particular combination is echoed in Sack's early conversation analytic work on suicide helpline calls and in Garfinkel's work on psychiatric clinics). Note in this respect Goffman (1967b:47-48):






Data for the paper are drawn chiefly from a brief observational study of mental patients in a modern research hospital. I use these data on the assumption that a logical place to learn about personal proprieties is among persons who have been locked up for spectacularly failing to maintain them. Their infractions of propriety occur in the confines of the ward, but the rules broken are quite general ones, leading us outward from the ward to a general study of our Anglo-American society.

Thus, one will find in Goffman's writings not only a critique of psychiatry as moving far too easily from social delicts to mental symptoms, resulting in a failure to assess the impropriety of acts that bring a person under the attention of the psychiatric care (see especially Goffman 1967c: 137ff. ) , such a critique is also couched in a programmatic enquiry into the construction and maintenance of the self in the rituals of face-of-face interaction. Goffman's [sociological method](#) has been influenced by phenomenology. It borrowed in particular from the work of A. Schutz on interactive relations, commonsense understanding via types and the situational character of relevance. Together with Harold Garfinkel, Goffman is at the basis of [ethnomethodology](#) and its further spin-off [conversation analysis](#).

- **Interaction order.** According to Anthony Giddens  , Goffman's enquiries into practical behaviour are informed by a set of systematic social theoretical assumptions. His sociology is one which centers on physical co-presence rather than on social groups. While groups continue to exist when their members are not together, encounters, by definition, only exist when the parties to them are physically in each other's presence. This helps explain Goffman's interest in
  - particular settings (e.g. how entering an elevator affects talk, talk between strangers on a platform waiting for a train, etc.)
  - forms of self-maintaining behaviour such as the display of 'focused interaction' (e.g. forming a 'huddle' during a reception) and of 'civil inattention'
  - conduct in public in situations involving embarrassment, face-saving behaviour and/or public displays of competence, for instance *response cries* (incl. 'spill cries' such as *Oops*) as an other-oriented form of self-talk in which "we display evidence of our alignment we take to events" (Goffman 1981:100 )
  - the role of temporal and spatial activity boundaries which result in inclusion (e.g. how to display intense involvement in talk) and exclusion (e.g. how the exclusion from talk of others in physical proximity is maintained simultaneously by the included and the excluded; see also some the distinctions made under the heading of [footing](#) below)

It is this concern with *situated activity systems* which are manifest in behaviour under conditions of co-presence unrelated to transsituational group or institutional membership that can be captured under the heading of an *interaction order* (Goffman 1983:2).

-  My concern over the years has been to promote acceptance of this face-to-face domain as an analytically viable one - a domain which might be titled, for want of any happy name, the *interaction order* - a domain whose preferred method of study is micro analysis.

For Goffman, talk is the basic medium of encounters, but talk isn't all: the state of co-presence is a physical state and it draws attention to the body, its disposition and display. For Goffman, "the body is not simply used as an 'adjunct' to communication in situations of co-presence; it is the anchor of the communicative skills which can be transferred to disembodied types of messages." (Giddens 1988:257 ) In this respect, Goodwin (2000:1491 ) talks about the need to investigate "the public visibility of the body as a dynamically unfolding, interactively organised locus for the production and display of meaning and action." Not surprisingly, such a programme will be critical of mentalist versions of meaning and cognition. According to

Collins (1988: 51-52), the aim is to arrive at the social ecology which is at the basis of any conversational situation. For Goffman,

🗉 the basis of language is not a primal intersubjectivity, a meeting of minds, but rather a common focus on a physical scene of action. [...] Goffman is looking at human beings the way a biologist would look at birds or mammals who are in range of each other. Goffman asserts that people must always pay attention to other human beings in their presence; each one needs to check out the others, if only to see if it is safe to ignore them.

■ The major weakness in Goffman's concept of an *interaction order* lies in a passive claim to its universality and autonomy. Giddens (1988:279 🗉) talks about the need "to think rather in terms of the intersection of varying contexts of co-presence, knit together by the paths that individuals trace out through the locales in which they live their day-to-day lives" so as to shed light on the "modes in which everyday social activity is implicated in very broad patterns of institutional reproduction".

○ Goffman's **frame analysis**

is essentially about how social actors organise their experience in terms of recognisable activities (e.g. a game of chess, a conference talk, a hold-up, etc.). A discussion of the concept can usefully begin with a reference to what Schutz called "frames of reference", i.e. a set of connections among objects, events, behaviours, etc. constituted as an anonymous and recognisable structure of relevancies. Goffman's development and use of the concept particularly brings out the multidimensional character and layeredness of such frameworks - frame built upon frame. He draws our attention to the interplay between primary frameworks and the constructed frameworks of social relationships (e.g. the availability of an open-air sound system with amplification which brings a single speaker into the earshot of a mass audience as a primary framework onto which the activity of making a speech during a political rally is anchored; another example would be an analysis of the activity of flirting as layered upon the frame space of physical movements in performing a dance, which, in its turn, is an activity patterned upon the primary framework of a particular type of music being played). It is in such moves as the stand-up comedian's comments which draw the late arrival of a spectator into the anecdote being told on the stage that one can see how interactants attend to the layeredness and interdependence of frames and play with the boundaries. Goffman's frame analysis seeks to draw attention to the ease with which people handle multiple, interdependent realities. ([Click](#)



for example analyses of how actors establish frames and manage potential disruptions).

Layeredness is also presupposed by the attendant notion of **key(ing)**. Key refers here to a set of conventions by which a given activity (which is already meaningful in terms of a primary framework) is transformed into something patterned on this activity but seen by the participants to be something quite else (Goffman 1974:43-4 🗉). Here we see again Goffman's self-declared interest in "game play", in con games, deceit, fraud, shows, etc. Keying brings the frame laminations of scripted situations of make-believe for purposes of entertainment into the scope of analysis, but note that keying is equally central to the occurrence (and meaningful

recognition) of playful, ironic moves in 'ordinary' interaction (e.g. an overtly exaggerated and therefore insincere love declaration between two friends acted out in front of a larger company).


+ Frame analysis reveals the complexity of mundane social activities and it brings out the arbitrary nature of any fixed, social-domain or activity-based dichotomy between the staged and the real. It brings out the reality-constructing capacities of what is staged, but also the staged nature of the everyday tangibly real. Note in this respect for instance that mass-media communication - including especially the solidly real called "news broadcasting" - is saturated by frame laminations which are deliberately and purposefully staged. What's more, an understanding of media communication is rather hard to arrive at, unless one comes to terms with the pretense of an absence of mediation and the audiences' routine submission to an assumption of direct communication - even in situations when such becomes extremely hard to sustain (a well-known example in this respect is the live coverage of UN-troops landing on the shores of Somalia in 1994, made possible by the primary frameworks provided by the various television crews which had landed ahead of the troops, waiting for them ready with camera, spotlights, satellite connections, etc.). More generally we can observe with Collins (1988:61) that


□ Framing permeates the level of ordinary social action. We live in a world of social relationships, in which roles are acted out, with various keyings and deceptions played upon them. This is the core of practical activities and occupations, of power and stratification. Here again, Goffman leads us to the brink of seeing the micro-reality upon which macro-structures are based, though he shies away from the theoretical implication.

Thus, in social-theoretical terms, Goffman's *frames* occupy a middle ground which avoids both the extremes of the total relativism of sheer intersubjectivity (whatever an actor appears to construct at the time) and that of the objective determinism of a reality which is pre-given and external to the actor. Frame analysis precisely invites attention to how the pre-given and the locally-constructed interrelate. Its particular analytical purchase lies in how interactants attend to the simultaneity of multiple realities, how they adjust constructions, manage disruptions, etc. Hence, not surprisingly, Goffman's interest in impostors, spies, theatrical performance but also the acting out of sociability in talk, i.e. phenomena which reveal the transformation of ordinary action into things seen in a different light.


+ "Frame space" offers a more precise perspective on the nature of norms in interaction. In this view, norms are not learned rules which speakers carry around in their heads, but they are ways in which situations unfold, so that participants feel they have to behave in a particular ways or make amends for not doing so (cf. Collins 1988:57 □).

+ Additionally, one can interpret Goffman's concern with how activities are layered upon primary frameworks as an invitation to study in greater detail how technology-dependent "channels of communication" constrain discourse practice, in a way which takes researchers not only beyond essentialist distinctions in "medium" such as the one between "speech" and "writing" (for instance, how else can one assess what the condition of talking over the telephone

does to interaction?; cf. Slembrouck (1995 ) but also beyond taken-for-granted assumptions about what counts as a relevant constraining frame. Should the latter be restricted to "channels of communication" or simply entail conditions of framing - irrespective of their nature (for instance, how does talk unfold differently if it goes together with the handling of objects while performing a particular professional task?)?

■ Finally, striking a slightly critical chord, frame analysis also exposes the limitations of an autonomist conception of the [interaction order](#). For instance, one can think of the "framing" capacities of code selection, switching and slippage, including the boundaries which are imposed as result on the [participation framework\(s\)](#) which apply, as well as for the establishment of secondary frames (e.g. code selection has primary frame function in establishing the secondary framework of a language class and code switching will often mark the transition from one activity to another or bring out a clash of frames - [click](#)  for an example of the latter). Such considerations take one beyond conditions of physical co-presence, so as to examine the role of transsituational processes of identity-formation in frame analysis (groups definable under conditions of "absence" or even "non-physical co-presence").


- The concept of **footing** is tied closely to that of frame and the taxonomies it has given rise to reiterate the Goffmanian concern with boundaries, centre, margin and focus in interaction. Footing stands for a speaker's shifting alignments in relation to the events at hand, what Goffman (1981:325-6) refers to as




 a combination of production format and participation status. What the speaker is engaged in doing, then, moment to moment through the course of a discourse in which he finds himself, is to meet whatever occurs by sustaining or changing footing. And by and large, it seems he selects that footing which provides him the least self-threatening position in the circumstances, or, differently phrased, the most defensible alignment he can muster.


A classic example of a change in footing is what Hymes refers to as "the breakthrough into performance", when the narrator of the myth starts speaking from within the mythical world. Thus, the concept brings out the need to distinguish between various speaker roles, for instance, when dealing with phenomena such as speech report, being a messenger and other types of situations where a person speaks on behalf of someone else. Goffman suggests, the 'speaker' can be replaced by a 'production sformat' which consists of three role-components:

- **animator**: the person who makes the sounds.
- **author**: the person who selected the words and the phrasing.
- **principal**: the person who is responsible for the opinions expressed.

These distinctions are not only instrumental in explaining some of the differences and shifts in speakerhood one commonly comes across when one is acting as, say, a spokesperson, a reporter, etc. or when a person shifts between such positions within a single stretch of discourse. Goffman has also proposed similar distinctions for the category of hearer, distinguishing between the **primary addressee** (a ratified hearer) and an **overhearer** (a non-ratified hearer, for


instance, an accidental bystander). He has also gone on to develop related typologies for kinds of talk according to the participants involved ([Click](#)  for a schematic representation).

➤ Footing offers a more precise perspective on the nature of role behaviour, which, on finer examination, as Collins (1988:57 ) points out, really consists of multiple voices and a way in which changes in footing are managed. The concept has been developed further in [pragmatics](#) (e.g. Levinson 1983, 1988 , Thomas 1986 ) and within [linguistic anthropology](#) - for instance, Hanks (1996:219-10), who captures its importance for enquiries into language use well:


 For our purposes, the details of Goffman's typology are less important than that it pushes beyond the simple dyad and opens up the possibility of a differentiated approach to multi-party talk. [...] it became inevitable that the speaker-addressee dyad would lose its place as the measure of all talk. Thus it is not accidental that the decomposition of the roles into animator, author, principal, addressee and overhearer was part of a broader push toward the study of different types of interaction, including multi-party talk. Once the boundaries of the dyad were breached, the inadequacy of its two parts became all too obvious. It is also clear in this framework that the relation between an individual and the language he or she speaks is mediated by social roles. [...] You simply cannot make inferences from utterance forms to human experience without working through the intermediate level of participant frameworks.

An analysis of footing is also of primordial importance when one is facing situations where discourse production depends on coordinated team work with a particular division of labour which is to lead to a finalised product. Thus, in a television commercial, a voice-over may take on the role of 'animator' for a message scripted by an advertising agency ('author') on behalf of a manufacturer ('principal').

- In a seminal article, Goffman defines **face** as (1967a:5)


 the positive social value which a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact. Face is an image of self delineated in terms of approved social attributes.


The term *line* here refers to a pattern of verbal and nonverbal acts by which someone expresses their view of the situation and its participants, especially him/herself. Quite importantly, such a line is seen in terms of effects which are ascribed to an individual as wilfully intended:

 Regardless of whether a person intends to take a line, he will find that he had done so in effect. The other participants will assume that he has more or less wilfully taken a stand, so that if he is to deal with their response to him he must take into consideration the impression they have possibly formed of him.


Interactants expect each other to behave in a way which is consistent with this image (*to be in*





*face* or *maintain face*). Participants may find themselves *in wrong face* when information is revealed which cannot be integrated into the line adopted thus far or they may find themselves *out of face* when participating in a contact without having ready a line of the kind participants are expected to take in such situations. The latter two correspond to the everyday expression "to lose face" in Anglo-American society, but Goffman also draws attention to other culture-specific usages such as "to give face" which occurs when one speaker arranges for another to take a better line than he would otherwise have been able. Goffman includes social valuables such as dignity, honour, self-respect and contempt within the scope of an analysis of face-work: "[W]hile his social face can be his most personal possession, and the centre of his security and pleasure, it is only on loan from society; it will be withdrawn unless he conducts himself in a way that is worthy of it" (1955:213 ). In a sense then, Goffman's essay takes us in more than one respect beyond the concerns of Brown & Levinson's programmatic formulation of an enquiry into [the mutual satisfaction of face wants in relation to \(verbal\) politeness strategies](#) adopted in the production of individual utterances. The intermediary notion of "line" continues to remain undeveloped - it raises issues of qualitative diversity in the occurrence of ratifiable situated personae with corresponding face work strategies. Nor has the thematic lead into the moral character of the interaction order been taken up in linguistic politeness enquiry. One can also think here of the sections which Goffman devotes to the "aggressive use of face work" which occurs when (1967a:24)

-  the purpose of the game is to preserve everyone's line from an inexcusable contradiction, while scoring as many points as possible against one's adversaries and making as many gains as possible for oneself. An audience to the struggle is almost a necessity.


In conclusion, note that Goffman's essay formed part of an enquiry in to the ritual roles of the self, where the self is seen both as a kind of image pieced together from the flow of events and as a kind of player in a ritual game. It leads to a particular view on human nature as a construct - for instance, by linking perception of what persons are "really" like with a repertoire of face-saving devices as situationally-called for. In more than one respect, one can trace echoes in this of [Foucault's](#) concept of individual subjectivity as a by-product of and as a function of discourse regimes (1967a:44-5):

-  Throughout this paper, it has been implied that underneath their differences in culture, people everywhere are the same. If persons have a universal human nature, they themselves are not to be looked to for an explanation of it. One must look rather to the fact that societies everywhere, if they are to be societies, must mobilise their members as self-regulating participants in social encounters. One way of mobilising the individual for this purpose is through ritual: he is taught to be perceptive, to have feelings attached to self and a self expressed through face, to have pride, honour, and dignity, to have considerateness, to have tact and a certain amount of poise. These are some of the elements of behaviour which must be built into the person if practical use is to be made of him as an interactant, and it is these elements that are referred to in part when one speaks of universal human nature.



 **Conversation analysis:** According to Deirdre Boden , conversation analysts are sociologists who have turned the problem of social order upside down. For them, the crucial question is not how people respond to a social order and its normative constraints, but rather how that order is brought about in a specific situation, through activities in quite specific time and place. To understand the orderliness of social life, one does not need abstraction and aggregation, but instead one must turn to the finegrained details of moment-to-moment existence and their sequential organisation.

In other words, conversation analysts can be seen as sociologists who assume that everyday social structure is a skilled accomplishment by competent actors (cf. [ethnomethodology](#)). Conversation is one such type of action and one which is particularly salient in social terms. Moreover, conversation can be recorded and described in detail, with transcriptions providing a yardstick for the replicability of social-scientific analysis. Thus, one version of the birth of conversation analysis - voiced in **Harvey Sacks**'s methodological notes (1984:26) - links the technological advances of the 1960s in an accidental fashion to the fulfilment of a particular methodological project (critical of Weber, critical of Durkheim).

 When I started to do research in sociology I figured that sociology could not be an actual science unless it was able to handle the details of actual events, handle them formally, and in the first instance be informative about them in the direct ways in which primitive sciences tend to be informative, that is, that someone else can go and see what was said is so. [...] It was not from any large interest in language or from some theoretical formulation of what should be studied that I started with tape-recorded conversation, but simply because I could get my hands on it and I could study it again and again, and also, consequentially, because others could look at what I had studied and make of it what they could, if, for example, they wanted to be able to disagree with me.

At what point exactly this preference for tape-recorded data became invested with an actively-developed suspicion towards the use of 'unsatisfactory data sources' in language description (e.g. interview data, observational data obtained through field notes, invented examples and experimental elicitation) is a matter of hindsight interpretation. For its practitioners, conversation analysis is a stake within the methodology debate of sociology (where does one situate one's sociological object of enquiry, i.e. society), with a clear preference for the formal properties of social action, and, in many cases, a suspicion towards any kind of pre-analytical theorising. For instance, conversation analysts often state their reluctance to allow categories to enter the analysis other than those entertained by the participants or revealed in an analysis of the sequential flow of interaction. This point is often captured through the ironising image of rejecting a "*bucket-theory of context*" which is contrasted with the preferred view of *context as a project and a product of interaction*. Note in this respect also the following proviso which John Heritage (1997:168) builds into a discussion of the structural organisation of turn-taking:

- Overall structural organisation, in short, is not a framework - fixed once and for all - to fit data into. Rather it is something that we're looking for and looking at to the extent that the parties orient to it in organising their talk.

This second, [etnomethodological](#) trait within conversation analysis is distinctly phenomenological (compare with the influence of Schutz's writings on [Goffman](#)). It marks a concern with the competences (seen as participant orientations) which underlie ordinary social activities. Note also how this trait receives a radical - and ultimately untenable - reading in the context of the inductivist positivism which characterises Sacks's formulation of the ideal of 'primitive science': for instance, Boden will have it that a description of the social-order-produced-in-context is a member's construct, not an analyst's construct.

- One central concept within conversation analysis is the *speaking turn*. According to Sacks et al. (1974), it takes two turns to have a conversation. However, turn taking is more than just a defining property of conversational activity. The study of its patterns allows one to describe contextual variation (examining, for instance, the structural organisation of turns, how speakers manage sequences as well as the internal design of turns). At the same time, the principle of taking turns in speech is claimed to be general enough to be universal to talk and it is something that speakers (normatively) attend to in interaction.
- A second central concept is that of the *adjacency pair*. The basic idea is that turns minimally come in pairs and the first of a pair creates certain expectations which constrain the possibilities for a second. Examples of adjacency pairs are question/answer, complaint/apology, greeting/greeting, accusation/denial, etc. Adjacency pairs can further be characterised by the occurrence of *preferred* or *dispreferred seconds* ([Click](#) for examples). A frequently-used term in this respect is *preference organisation*.
- The occurrence of adjacency pairs in talk also forms the basis for the concept of *sequential implicativeness*: each move in a conversation is essentially a response to the preceding talk and an anticipation of the kind of talk which is to follow. In formulating their present turn, speakers show their understanding of the previous turn and reveal their expectations about the next turn to come. This is often singled out as conversation analysis's most important insight, viz. that actors, in the course of interaction, display to each other their understanding of what they are doing - an insight which can be traced to phenomenology's belief that actors maintain an awareness of their own actions, and it is this awareness which is displayed to the other party (see Goodwin 1990, Hanks 1996:218).

**+** / **-** The major strength of conversation analysis lies in the idea that *an important area of interactional meaning is revealed in the sequence*. Its most powerful idea is undoubtedly that human interactants continually display to each other, in the course of interaction, their own understanding of what they are doing. This, among other things, creates room for a much more dynamic, interactional view on speech acts than is enabled by [analytical philosophy](#) and mainstream pragmatics ([Click](#) for a contrastive analysis of two exchanges in this light). Yet, note in one and the same breath, that there is a problem over the the kind of participant outlook that tends to be presupposed in conversation analysis. Margaret Wetherell (1998:402) captures this well when she conducts the "debate" between

## conversation analysis and post-structuralism:

- ❏ If the problem with post-structuralist analysis is that they rarely focus on actual social interaction, then the problem with conversation analysis is that they rarely raise their eyes from the next turn in the conversation, and, further, this is not an entire conversation or sizeable slice of social life but usually a tiny fragment. [...]

In short, the problem might be what in practice is regarded as a sequence and why the "sequentially implicated" cannot also include linkage in the form of a display of uptake of what was said during a previous, related occasion of talk (e.g. through the use of reported speech, speakers may simultaneously display their understanding of the immediately preceding turn in the conversation into which they are engaged and their understanding of what occurred during a previous conversation or textual experience). One may also take a here lead from recent research into complex technological work environments, for instance, a railway control room (Hindmarsh & Heath 2000:76), in which

- ❏ personnel have, as a matter of their daily activities, to make reference to, and mutually constitute, the sense and significance of a continually changing range of 'objects' displayed on screens and in documents [and] talk and bodily conduct is used within organisational activities to produce coherent and sequentially relevant objects and scenes

Such research suggests that sequence in discourse may be understood in an extended sense, consisting of various "tracks" involving different modalities and characterised by the occurrence of selectively shifting attention producing moments of divergence and convergence with the conversational track(s) which the conversation analyst habitually attends to. By the same token, a shared television experience involving two viewers before a screen (say, watching a football game) may be understood in terms of conversational turns being implicated in both the sequence which is produced between the two talkers and the sequence of images and words coming from the television set and which the talkers' turns show their particular understanding of. Note how this point in one sense at least can amount to closing some of the gaps which over the years have separated conversation analysis from Goffman's early work. So, while conversation analysis originated in Goffman's project, it is also true that it resulted in a narrowing of relevant concerns. Giddens (1988:266) captures both. One half of the observation marks the departure from more narrowly 'linguistic' preoccupations:

- ☐ Talk is the basic medium of focused encounters and the conversation is the prototype of the exchange of utterances involved in talk. Using the word 'talk' rather than 'language' is of the first importance to the analysis which Goffman seeks to provide. 'Language' suggests a formal system of signs and rules. 'Talk' carries more the flavour of the situated nature of utterances and gestures embedded within the routine enactment of encounters. In speaking of verbal 'conversations', rather than of 'speech', Goffman stresses that the meaning of what is said must be interpreted in terms of a temporal sequence of utterances. Talk is not something which is just 'used' in circumstances of interaction. [...] In his early work, Goffman both anticipated and helped shape the development of what has subsequently come to be called 'conversation analysis'; in his later writings he has drawn upon it in developing his own discussions of talk and interaction.

The second half of the observation follows on the next page (Giddens 1988:267), where we read that

- ☐ Goffman is able to show some of the limitations involved in thinking of talk in terms of statements calling forth replies. Many moves do seem to invoke rejoinders, but there are a variety of ways in which individuals can express intentions, provide approval or disapproval, or otherwise make their views known, without directly committing themselves to turn-taking within the conversation. A key aspect of all talk in situations of interaction is that both speakers and listeners depend upon a saturated physical and social context for making sense of what is said.

Coming to terms with this idea of the "saturated physical and social context" constitutes one of the biggest challenges facing the discourse analyst. This is not only a matter of what is included (a range of observable phenomena such as talk, gesture, posture, objects which frame action, etc.) but also how we understand their manifestations and relevance. One promising possibility in this respect lies in a dynamic understanding of context, i.e. context itself as "sequentially implicated" but without conversation analysis's overt restriction of "context" to the "surrounding talk". As Goodwin (2000:1519-1520) suggests, context, in such a view,

- ☐ is not simply a set of features presupposed or invoked by a strip of talk, but a dynamic, temporally unfolding process accomplished through the ongoing rearrangement of structures in the talk, participants' bodies, relevant artefacts, spaces, and features of the material surround that are the focus of the participants' scrutiny. Crucial to this process is the way in which the detailed structure of talk, as articulated through sequential organisation, provides for the continuous updating and rearrangements of contexts for the production and interpretation of action. [my emphasis]

However, note that such a concern with a dynamic understanding of the processes through which social and physical context are actively constructed by participants (i.e. as displayed to one another) still says very little about the analyst's active role in the construction of "contexts-as-researched" (compare with [natural histories of discourse](#)).

⊕ / ⊖ A one-sided priority on a participant's understanding of what goes on in interaction and what that interaction is about also constitutes a pitfall in its own right, if it means that common sense categories

and understandings of interactional purposes, goals and orderliness are mistaken for exhaustive explanations of why discourse displays the properties it does. While it is true that conversation analysis quite rightfully warns against the risks inherent in a macro leap which erases the participant from the picture of analysis and reduces the significance of talk to a mere reflection of an *a priori* societal and/or cultural context, the converse holds equally in the case of a failure to recognise contextual relevance beyond the purview of the participant's "local talk"-orientations in discourse as well for assuming automatically that the categories revealed in the ways that speakers can be shown to attend to a local conversational sequence are necessarily also members' categories or exclusively members' categories. Wetherell (1998:402-3) observes:

- Schegloff argues that analysts should not import their own categories into participants' discourse but should focus instead on participant orientations. Further, analytic claims should be demonstrable. Schegloff's notion of analytic concepts uncontaminated by theorists' categories does not entail, however, that no analytic concepts will be applied [...] Rather, concepts such as conditional relevance, for example, or the notion of accountability, or preferred or dispreferred responses are used to identify patterns in talk and to create an ordered sense of what is going on. Presumably Schegloff would argue that this does not count as imposing theorists' categories on participants' orientations since such concepts are intensely empirical, grounded in analysis and built up from previous descriptive studies of talk. [...] the advantage for Schegloff of such an approach is that it gives scholarly criteria for correctness and grounds academic disputes, allowing appeals to data, and it closes down the infinity of contexts which could be potentially relevant to something demonstrable - what the participants take as relevant. [...] However,] one problem from a critical perspective is that Schegloff's sense of participant orientation may be unacceptably narrow. [...] in practice for Schegloff, participant orientation seems to mean only what is relevant for the participants in this particular conversational moment. Ironically, of course, it is the conversation analyst in selecting for analysis part of a conversation or continuing interaction who defines this relevance for the participant. In restricting the analyst's gaze to this fragment, previous conversations, even previous turns in the same continuing conversation become irrelevant for the analyst but also, by dictat, for the participants. We do not seem to have escaped, therefore, from the imposition of theorists' categories and concerns.


The reluctance to admit the presence of 'pre-existing' categories in conversation analysis also brings with it a number of methodological uncertainties. For instance, with reference to a short telephone exchange in which a school employee rings a mother whose son may be a truant from school, John Heritage (1998:163) argues:


- The assumption is that it is fundamentally through interaction that context is built, invoked and managed and that it is through interaction that institutional imperatives originating from outside the interaction are evidenced and are made real and enforceable for the participants.

The question can be raised whether such 'imperatives originating from outside' are to be identified prior to the analysis (cf. "I am looking at a particular type of institutional routine or exchange") or should only be recognised as existing because they emerge from an analysis of interactive data (cf. "the data of the exchange tell me that I am dealing with a particular type of routine"). Is it at all feasible to separate these two moments of 'categorisation'? Even when such issues are understood in


phenomenological rather than in positivist terms, a recognition of an "[ethnographic moment](#)" is in place here.




 Social reality is, for **ethnomethodology**, an intersubjective accomplishment. In the words of **Harold Garfinkel** (1972:309):

 I use the term *ethnomethodology* to refer to various policies, methods, results, risks, and lunacies with which to locate and accomplish the study of the rational properties of practical actions as contingent ongoing accomplishments or organised artful practices of everyday life.

Ethnomethodology thus shares a set of assumptions with [conversation analysis](#). However, despite the phenomenological affinities, ethnomethodology has different analytical priorities and emphases. Although it does not exclude the sequential analysis of turn-per-turn talk, ethnomethodology is much more orientated towards examining the role of text and talk in the daily accomplishment of institutional actions, i.e. what Rod Watson calls "texts as active social phenomena". Let me recall the impressively informative list at the beginning of Watson (1987:80):

 Tattoos, bus tickets, pay slips, street signs, time indications on watch faces, chalked information on blackboards, computer VDU displays, car dashboards, company logos, contracts, railway timetables, television programme titles, teletexts, T-shirt epigrams, 'on'/'off' switches, £10 notes and other bank notes, passports and identity cards, cheques and payslips, the Bible, receipts, newspapers and magazines, road markings, computer keyboards, medical prescriptions, birthday cards, billboard advertisements, maps, Hansard, graffiti on walls, music scores, church liturgies, drivers' licences, birth, marriage and death certificates, voting slips, degree certificates, book-keepers' accounts, stock inventories, cricket scoreboards, credit cards - these and countless other items that involve written language and diagrammatic forms indicate the immensely pervasive, widespread and institutionalised place of texts in our society. This list also indicates the extraordinary diversity in the work done by texts - contractual commitments, ratifying work, facilitating work, record-keeping, persuasive work, identity-establishing work, and so on. In fact, one might suggest that virtually every recognisable activity in our society has its textual aspects, involving and incorporating people's monitoring of written or textual 'signs' - texts that, in a wide variety of ways, help us to orientate ourselves to that activity, occasion or setting and to make sense of it.

At the same time, ethnomethodology is much more concerned with the performative dimensions of text and/or talk, e.g. reporting as a persuasive display of professional competence which renders members' actions accountable. Again, in the words of Garfinkel (1972:323, see also Garfinkel 1967:vi ), the assumption is indeed that:

- Any setting organises its activities to make its properties as an organised environment of practical activities detectable, countable, recordable, reportable, tell-a-story-aboutable, analysable - in short, *accountable*.



[\(back to list\)](#)



## Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to Ronald Soetaert. He suggested the idea to me to develop a website of this kind. I am also particularly grateful to Jan Blommaert, Aaron Cicourel, Jim Collins, Peter Flynn, Alexandra Jaffe, Chris Hall, Monica Heller, Kay McCormick, Ben Rampton, Srikant Sarangi, Brian Street, Ellen Van Praet, Jef Verschueren and Susan White for the many shadow conversations and reading suggestions which continue to inform this overview.






Comments are welcome at [Prof. S.](#)




[Slembrouck](#), Department of English, University of Gent, Rozier 44, 9000 Gent.





© Stef Slembrouck (1998, 1999-2001<sup>2</sup>, 2002-2003<sup>3</sup>)  
Most recent update undefined



# M.M. Bakhtin: a dialogic view on language use.


- Writing shortly after de Saussure, Bakhtin developed a truly, [pragmatic](#) theory of language use (at a time when there was little interest in mundane everyday talk and without being able to rely on recorded spoken data). At the heart of it is the view that language is a dialogic phenomenon. This means that the basic unit of language is the utterance and the utterance can never be isolated from the sequence in which occurs (this claim echoes one of the axioms of [conversation analysis](#) but it has to be added that the use of the term "sequence" is an anachronism in the context of Bakhtin's writings). For Bakhtin, the utterance always stands in a dialogic relationship to previous utterances which have been voiced or which are presupposed (in the words of V. Voloshinov, *the utterance is a reception of ... as well as a response to ...*).
- Important "spin-offs":
  - **Tendencies in reported speech.** One of the obvious ways in which different voices may be simultaneously present in a piece of discourse is when someone else's speech is quoted, reported or alluded to. Especially in the work of Bakhtin's close associate, **Valentin Voloshinov**, one finds the idea that a truly social linguistics must concentrate on the historically and diatypically shifting tendencies in the report of speech as imbued with ideology.
  - Discursive practice is essentially **heteroglossic**. This view can be applied in a number of ways. For instance, one may examine how in a social worker's narrative of a case of child abuse one finds traces of medical discourse, administrative discourse, troubles talk, therapeutic discourse. Heteroglossia then applies
    1. not only in the sense that social workers cite and refer to what doctors, teachers, family therapists, etc. have said about the case (Fairclough 1992a manifest intertextuality),
    2. but also in the sense that it is difficult for a social worker to construct a narrative of the case without making use of the categories and forms of knowledge embodied in the discursive formations of other professions ((Fairclough 1992a constitutive intertextuality; see also [M. Foucault](#)).
    3.  [Click](#) here for an example analysis.
- A dialogic view of language goes entirely against the Saussurean idea that language can be viewed as an autonomous system which can be described by recourse to relationships between signs which are internal to the system. A dialogic view on language prioritises texts which are **impure** in their make-up. In this view, the boundaries between "language systems" exist by virtue of social acts which establish, deny or maintain difference (e.g. the use of scare quotes or particular hedges may signal the dialect origins of a lexical item or that it belongs to another code

and/or register). Such boundaries are a constant source of contention and struggle and there is only an indirect relationship with how language users perceive and rationalise difference (cf. Heller (2000 )) on ideologies of bilingualism as "two monolingualisms stuck together"). This position has resulted into an interest in code-slippage as a by-product of language performance which indexes a speaker's life history (cf. Blommaert & Slembrouck (2000 )) as well as an interest in playful **re-accentuation** as a resource of "behavioural ideology" (cf. Rampton's work on liminality and situated stylisations of non-standard accents - e.g. hyper-Cockney - by youngsters from diverse ethnic backgrounds in London, e.g. Rampton (1999, 2001 )).

- Bakhtin's writings have been very influential in European forms of discourse analysis but also in [linguistic anthropology](#). As to the first, it is not surprising for discussions/illustrations of heteroglossia to focus more often on literary uses and data from advertising, because these are discursive domains where double-voicedness tends to be exploited more actively and visibly and where genres come with the expectation that the interpretation of textual cues requires a more or less active recognition of double-voiced constituents ( [Click](#) here for an example analysis). However, a clear understanding of more routine heteroglossic tendencies in the context of social and discursive change tends to be harder to arrive at, and yet this is the area where Bakhtin's influence is at its most challenging. It is a problem of **a theory of genre** (see in particular Bakhtin's (1986 )) heuristic distinction between primary and secondary genres) and of explicating how changes in situated forms of language use are implicated in social change (see for instance Hanks (1988 )), which offers an analysis of a number of written texts produced by native officials in early colonial Maya society (Mexico) as blending Maya and Spanish discourse forms into new genres. As discussed in detail in Fairclough (1992b )), Bakhtin invites us to view genres metaphorically as "the drive belts between the history of language and the history of society". Shifts and transformations in particular genre-conventions are both indexical of social change and contribute accumulatively to social change. Languages change through transformations within genre-conventions, while social change is first felt at the level of the genre.

---

© Stef Slembrouck (1998, 1999-2000<sup>2</sup> - Most recent update undefined)

 Comments welcome at [Prof. dr. S. Slembrouck](#), Department of English, University of Gent, Rozier 44, 9000 Gent.

## What is meant by "discourse analysis"?

### LIST OF REFERENCES

---

1. AGAR, Michael, 1996<sup>2</sup>, **The Professional Stranger. An Informal Introduction to Ethnography**. San Diego: Academic Press.
2. ATKINSON, John & DREW, Paul, 1979. **Order in Court. The organisation of verbal interaction in judicial settings**, London: MacMillan.
3. AUSTIN, John L., 1962. **How to Do Things with Words**. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
4. BAKHTIN, Mikhail M., 1986, 'The problem of speech genre'. In: **Speech Genre and Other Essays**, Austin: University of Texas Press, 60-102.
5. BARTON, David, 1994, **Literacy: An Introduction to the Ecology of Written Language**. Oxford: Blackwell.
6. BAUMAN, Richard & SHERZER, Joel, 1974 (eds.), **Explorations in the Ethnography of Speaking**. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
7. BAYNHAM, Mike & SLEMBROUCK, Stef, 1999. 'Speech representation and institutional discourse'. **Text**, 19/4; 439-457.
8. BLOMMAERT, Jan & SLEMBROUCK, Stef, 2000. 'Data formulation as text and context: the (aesth)etics of analysing asylum seekers' narratives'. **LPI Working Papers No. 2**, Gent.
9. BODEN, Deirdre, 1994. **The Business of Talk. Organisations in Action**. Cambridge: Polity Press.
10. BOURDIEU, Pierre, 'The economics of linguistic exchanges', **Social Science Information**, 16:6, 645-668.
11. BOURDIEU, Pierre, 1984, 'Ce que parler veut dire'. In: **Questions de Sociologie**. Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 95-112.
12. BOURDIEU, Pierre, 1984, 'Le marché linguistique'. In: **Questions de Sociologie**. Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 121-137.
13. BOURDIEU, Pierre, 1986, 'The forms of capital'. In: **Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education**, ed. J. Richardson, New York: Greenwood Press.
14. BROWN, Penelope & LEVINSON, Stephen, 1987. **Politeness. Some universals in language use**. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
15. CAMERON, Deborah, 1997. 'Theoretical debates in feminist linguistics: questions of sex and gender'. In: R. Wodak (ed.), **Gender and Discourse**. London: Sage, 21-35.
16. COLLINS, James, 1996. 'Socialisation to text: structure and contradiction in schooled literacy'. In: M. Silverstein & G. Urban (eds.) **Natural Histories of Discourse**. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 203-228.
17. COLLINS, James, 1998. 'Our ideologies and theirs.' In: B. Schieffelin, K. Woolard & P. Kroskrity (eds.), **Language ideologies. Practice and Theory**. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 256-270.
18. COLLINS, Randal, 1988. 'Theoretical continuities in Goffman's work'. In: P. Drew & A. Wootton (eds.), **Erving Goffman. Exploring the Interaction Order**. Cambridge: Polity Press, 39-63.
19. CRYSTAL, David & DAVY Derek, 1969. **Investigating English Style**. London: Longman.


20. COULTHARD, Malcolm, 1985. **An introduction to Discourse Analysis**. London: Longman.
21. DEFOORT, Jos, 1996. **Het woekerende schrift**. Antwerp: Hadewych.
22. DURANTI, Alessandro & GOODWIN, Charles, 1992a. 'Rethinking context: an introduction'. In: A. Duranti & C. Goodwin (eds.), 1994, **Rethinking Context. Language as an Interactive Phenomenon**. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1-42.
23. DURANTI, Alessandro & GOODWIN, Charles, 1992b. 'Editors' introduction to W. Hanks, "The indexical ground of reference"'. In: A. Duranti & C. Goodwin (eds.), 43-45. 1994, **Rethinking Context. Language as an Interactive Phenomenon**. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,
24. DURANTI, Alessandro, 1993. 'Intentions, self, and responsibility: an essay in Samoan ethnopragmatics'. In: J. Hill & J. Irvine (eds.), **Responsibility and Evidence in Oral Discourse**. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 24-47.
25. DURANTI, Alessandro, 1997. **Linguistic Anthropology**. Cambridge University Press.
26. DURANTI, Alessandro, 2001. 'Linguistic Anthropology: history, ideas, and issues'. In: A. Duranti (ed.), **Linguistic Anthropology: A Reader**. Oxford: Blackwell.
27. DU BOIS John, 1993. 'Meaning without intention: lessons from divination'. In: J. Hill & J. Irvine (eds.), **Responsibility and Evidence in Oral Discourse**. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 48-71.
28. FAIRCLOUGH, Norman, 1992a. **Discourse and Social Change**. Cambridge: Polity Press.
29. FAIRCLOUGH, Norman, 1992b. 'Discourse and text: linguistic and intertextual analysis within discourse analysis'. **Discourse and Society**, 3, 192-217.
30. FOUCAULT, Michèl, 1973. **The Birth of the Clinic: an Archaeology of Medical Perception**. London: Tavistock.
31. FOUCAULT, Michèl, 1980. **Power/Knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings**. 1980 (ed. C. Gordon). Brighton: Harvester.
32. FOUCAULT, Michèl, 1984. 'Nietsche, genealogy, history'. In: P. Rabinow (ed.), **The Foucault Reader**. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
33. GARFINKEL, Harold, 1967. **Studies in Ethnomethodology**.
34. GARFINKEL, Harold, 1972. 'Remarks on Ethnomethodology'. In: J. Gumperz & D. Hymes (eds.), **The Ethnography of Communication. Directions in Sociolinguistics**. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 301-324.
35. GIDDENS, Anthony, 1998, "Goffman as a systematic social theorist". In: P. Drew & A. Wootton (eds.), **Erving Goffman. Exploring the Interaction Order**. Cambridge: Polity Press, 250-279.
36. GOFFMAN, Erving, 1955, "On face-work: an analysis of ritual elements in social interaction". **Psychiatry**, 18, 213-31.
37. GOFFMAN, Erving, 1959. **The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life**. New York: Doubleday Anchor.
38. GOFFMAN, Erving, 1967a, 'On face-work: an analysis of ritual elements in social interaction'. In: **Interaction Ritual: Essays on Face-to-Face Behaviour**. New York: Pantheon Books, 5-45.
39. GOFFMAN, Erving, 1967b, 'The nature of deference and demeanour'. In: **Interaction Ritual: Essays on Face-to-Face Behaviour**. New York: Pantheon Books, 47-95.

40. GOFFMAN, Erving, 1967c, 'Mental symptoms and public order'. In: **Interaction Ritual: Essays on Face-to-Face Behaviour**. New York: Pantheon Books, 137-148.
41. GOFFMAN, Erving, 1974. **Frame Analysis. An Essay on the Organisation of Experience**. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
42. GOFFMAN, Erving, 1981. 'Response cries', In: **Forms of Talk**. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 78-122.
43. GOFFMAN, Erving, 1983. 'The interaction order'. **American Sociological Review**, 48, 1-17.
44. GRICE, H. Paul, 1976. 'Logic and conversation'. In: P. Cole & J.L. Morgan (eds.), **Syntax and Semantics: Volume 3**. New York: Academic Press, 41-58.
45. GRICE, H. Paul, 1978. 'Further Notes on Logic and Conversation'. In: P. Cole (ed.), **Syntax and Semantics: Volume 9**. New York: Academic Press, 113-128.
46. GOODWIN, Charles, 2000. 'Action and embodiment within situated human interaction'. **Journal of Pragmatics**, 32, 1489-1522.
47. GOODWIN, Marjorie, 1990. **He-Said-She-Said: The Interactive Organisation of Talk in an Urban Black Peer Group**. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
48. GUMPERZ, John & HYMES, Dell, 1972 (eds.). **Directions in Sociolinguistics. The Ethnography of Communication**. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
49. GUMPERZ, John, 1992. 'Contextualisation revisited'. In: P. Auer & A. Di Luzio, **The Contextualisation of Language**. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 39-53.
50. GUMPERZ, John, 1999. 'On interactional sociolinguistic method'. In: C. Roberts & S. Sarangi (eds.) **Talk, Work and Institutional Order. Discourse in Medical, Mediation and Management Settings**. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 453-471.
51. HALLIDAY, Michael A.K., McINTOSH, Angus & STREVEENS, Peter, 1964. **The Linguistic Sciences and Language Teaching**. London: Longman.
52. HALLIDAY, Michael A.K., 1978. **Language as a Social Semiotic**. London: Edward Arnold.
53. HALLIDAY, Michael A.K., 1985. **An Introduction to Functional Grammar**. London: Edward Arnold.
54. HERITAGE, John, 1998. 'Conversational analysis and institutional talk'. In: D. Silverman (ed.), **Qualitative Research: Theory, Method and Practice**. London: Sage, 161-182.
55. HINDMARSH, Jon & HEATH, Christian, 2000. 'Embodied reference: A study of deixis in workplace interaction'. **Selected Papers of the Work, Interaction & Technology Research Group**, 1, 75-104.
56. HANKS, William, 1988. 'Discourse genre in a theory of practice'. **American Ethnologist**, 14:4, 688-692.
57. HANKS, William, 1996. **Language and Communicative Practices**. Oxford: Westview Press.
58. HYMES, Dell, 1964.
59. HYMES, Dell, 1972. 'Models of the Interaction of Language and Social Life'. In: J. Gumperz & D. Hymes, **Directions in Sociolinguistics: the Ethnography of Communication**. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 35-71.
60. HELLER, Monica, 2000. 'Bilingualism and identity in the post-modern world'. **Estudios de Sociolinguística**, 1/2.
61. HYMES, Dell, 1980. 'What is ethnography?' In: **Language and education: ethnolinguistic essays**. Washington: Center for Applied Linguistics.

62. HOWARTH, David. **Discourse**. Buckingham: Open University Press.
63. JAWORSKI Adam & COUPLAND Nikolas, 1999. **The Discourse Reader**. London: Routledge.
64. LACLAU Ernesto & MOUFFE Chantal, 1985. **Hegemony and socialist strategy. Towards a radical democratic politics**. London: Verso.
65. LEECH Geoffrey, 1983, **The Principles of Pragmatics**. London: Longman.
66. LEVINSON Stephen, 1983. **Pragmatics**. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
67. LEVINSON, Stephen, 1987. 'Putting linguistics on a proper footing: Explorations in Goffman's concepts of participation'. In: P. Drew & A. Woolton (eds.), **Goffman: An Interdisciplinary Appreciation**. Oxford: Polity Press.
68. MARTIN James R., 1985. **English Text**.
69. McNAY Lois, 1994. **Foucault. A Critical Introduction**. Cambridge: Polity Press.
70. MERTZ, Elizabeth, 1996. 'Recontextualisation as socialisation: text and pragmatics in the law school classrooms'. In: M. Silverstein & G. Urban (eds.), **Natural Histories of Discourse**. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 229-249.
71. RAMPTON, Ben, 1999, 'Sociolinguistics and cultural studies: new ethnicities, liminality and interaction'. **Social Semiotics**, 9/3, 355-373.
72. RAMPTON, Ben, 2001, 'Critique in interaction'. **Critique of Anthropology**, 21/1.
73. SACKS, Harvey, SCHEGLOFF, Emmanuel & JEFFERSON, Gail, 1974, 'A simplest systematics for the organisation of turn-taking for conversation'. **Language**, 50: 696-735.
74. SACKS, Harvey, 1984. 'Methodological remarks'. In: J. Atkinson & J. Heritage, **Structures of Social Action. Studies in Conversation Analysis**. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 21-27.
75. SARANGI, Srikant & SLEMBROUCK, Stefaan, 1997, 'Confrontational asymmetries in institutional discourse: a socio-pragmatic view of information exchange and face management'. In: J. Blommaert & C. Bulcaen (eds.), **Political Linguistics**, 255-275.
76. SCHEPER-HUGHES, Nancy, 2000, 'Ire in Ireland'. **Ethnography**, 1:1, 117-140.
77. SEARLE, John, 1969. **Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language**. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
78. SEARLE John, 1983. **Intentionality. An Essay in the Philosophy of Mind**. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
79. SILVERSTEIN, Michael & URBAN, Greg, 1996. 'The natural history of discourse'. In: M. Silverstein & G. Urban (eds.), **Natural Histories of Discourse**. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1-20.
80. SLEMBROUCK, Stef, 2001. 'Explanation, interpretation and critique in the analysis of discourse'. **Critique of Anthropology**, 21:1, 33-57.
81. STREET Brian, 1993, **Social Literacies: Critical Approaches to Literacy in Development, Ethnography and Education**. London: Longman.

82. STUBBS Michael, 1983. **Discourse Analysis: The Sociolinguistic Analysis of Natural Language**. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
  83. THOMAS, Jenny, 1986. **The Dynamics of Discourse. A Pragmatic Analysis of Confrontational Interaction**. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation. Lancaster University.
  84. TORFING, Jacob, 1999. **New Theories of Discourse. Laclau, Mouffe and Žižek**. Oxford: Blackwell.
  85. VERSCHUEREN, Jef, 1985. **What People Say They Do with Words. Prolegomena to a Empirical-Conceptual Approach to Linguistic Action**. Norwood: Ablex.
  86. WACQUANT, Loïc, 2002, 'Death Notice: Pierre Bourdieu'. In: **Anthropology News**, 46:3, 53.
  87. WATSON, Rod, 1997, 'Ethnomethodology and textual analysis'. In: D. Silverman (ed.), **Qualitative Research: Theory, Method and Practice**. London: Sage, 80-98
  88. WETHERELL, Margaret, 1998, 'Positioning and interpretative repertoires: conversation analysis and post-structuralism in dialogue.' **Discourse and Society**, 9(3), xx-xx.
- 

© Stef Slembrouck (1998, 1999-2001<sup>2</sup> - Most recent update undefined)

 Comments welcome at [Prof. dr. S. Slembrouck](#), Department of English, University of Gent, Rozier 44, 9000 Gent.