**2. 2 Ethnography of speaking**

-In different societies there are different ways of using language. Therefore, there is a need for a *framework* to conduct systematic studies on how people of different cultural backgrounds use language, how they carry out conversations.

-The ethnography of speaking (ES) studies language use as displayed in the daily life of particular speech communities. (*“ethnography of speaking”* is often referred to by the term *“ethnography of communication”*).

-Ethnography of speaking obtains and interprets information by learning the ways of communicating appropriately in a community.

-Its theoretical contributions are centred around the study of “situated discourse”: linguistic performance as the locus of relationship between *language* and *socio-cultural order*. In other words, ethnography of speaking studies what is accomplished through speaking and how speech is related to and is constructed by particular aspects of social organization.

-Anthropological linguists have long stressed the importance of examining communicative behaviour in the context of a culture, though the term *ethnography of speaking* itself was not coined until the 1970s, by the American anthropological linguist Dell Hymes who introduced the notion of communicative competence (knowledge of the rules of a language *plus* the ability to use these rules in socially and culturally appropriate ways) and developed a framework with several components for analyzing communicative events.

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

**2.3 Interactional sociolinguistics**

Interactional sociolinguistics is an approach to analysing discourse which is associated with John Gumperz, another of those who has made a large contribution to the development of the field of sociolinguists. This approach shares a great deal with the ethnography of communication framework from which it developed; but an interactional sociolinguistic approach pays particular attention to the clues people use to *interpret* conversational interaction within its ethnographic context (p.378)

**2.3.1 Contextualization cues**

Gumperz (1982) identifies contextualization cues as features “by which speakers signal and listeners interpret what the activity is, how the semantic content is to be understood and *how* each sentence relates to what precedes or follows”.

Example (4) below, the waiter tries to do his customers a favour by offering them a choice of languages.

Example (4)

*Three people in a Montreal café. Two are fluent bilinguals, one has only a working knowledge of French.*

**1.** Waiter: Anglais ou francais, English or French?

**2.** Bilingual Customers: Bien, les deux [‘well both’]

**3.** Waiter: No, mais, anglais ou francais? [‘No, but, English or French?’]

**4.** Bilingual Customers: It doesn’t matter, c’est comme vous voulez [‘Whatever you want’]

**5.** Waiter: (sigh*)* OK, OK, I’ll be back in a minute.

**Explanation**

The customers refuse to choose and so force the waiter to make the choice. Here the contextualization cues – in the form of the waiter’s persistence and repetition of his question (line 3), his sigh and his temporary abandonment of the customers – all suggest that he is very unhappy at being forced to make this choice.

**2.4 Conversation Analysis**: it has its roots in sociology, and sociologists argue its value in demonstrating that talk *is* action. CA researchers approach communication as jointly organized activity like dancing, or a cooperative musical.

Conversation analysis is now used by researchers in many other disciplines, including sociolinguists who are interested in analysing the structure of talk, and explaining how we manage the rules of ordinary everyday conversation at the most-micro-level. At the simplest level, for instance, it is noticeable that many interactions involve *adjacency pairs*, related utterances produced by two successive speakers (as shown in example 5) in such a way that the second utterance is identified as a follow up to the first.

Example (5)

**(a)** A: Hi there

B: Hi

**(b)** A: See you later

B: Ciao

**(c)** A: What page are you on?

B: Thirty-three

**(d)** A: Wanna come up for dinner tonight?

B: Mm yeah thanks that’d be nice

So, in this example, greetings, farewells, questions and answers, invitations and acceptances/refusals are all examples of *adjacency pairs.*

**Exercise**

Identify possible adjacency pairs in the following list of utterances and comment on any difficulties you encounter. The first step is to sort them into first pair parts and second pair parts. Then try to match them up.

-Can I help you?

-I’d like some juice

-Sorry I didn’t mean to be rude

-I haven’t actually most of them are in the dishwasher

-No I am fine thanks

-Just be careful when you open that cupboard

-Don’t talk to me like that

-Could you open the door?

-OK thanks

-Yes the bus station is the end of this street

-Like what?

-Well don’t you boss me around

-I can’t understand what you’re saying

-Sorry but I just have to go or I’ll be late

**2.4.1 Preferred and dispreferred second pair parts**

Identifying adjacency pairs is not always straightforward in conversations. Conversation analysis looks for internal linguistic clues and paralinguistic clues to identify preferred or dispreferred responses. So *OK* often functions as an acknowledgement of a point made, while *well* may signal that a qualification is coming next, as in example (6).

Example (6)

Monica: wasn’t that a great concert

Don: well, I was a bit tired

**Explanation**

Though Don does not say so explicitly, the use of *well* to introduce the second part of this adjacency pair, responding to Monica’s solicitation of his opinion, suggests he does not agree with her. His comment *I was a bit tired* can be interpreted as an excuse, implying that lack of attention explains his lack of appreciation.

**2.4.2 Conversational feedback**

Adjacency pairs are one aspect of the systematics of turn-taking which is a focus of CA. Attention to conversational feedback is another. At times in a conversation, one person may hold the floor for a period while recounting a narrative, for instance, or describing an experience, or explaining how something works. Meanwhile the other participant typically provides evidence that they are attending to the speaker, i.e. some kind of feedback which may be verbal (*mm,* *uh-huh,* *right)* or non-verbal (head nodding, attentive gaze).

**2.5 Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)**

The previous four approaches are descriptive in their starting points revealing the political and social, and especially cross-cultural, implications. Critical discourse analysis: “by contrast is explicitly concerned with investigating how language is used to construct and maintain power relationships in society; the aim is to show up connections between language and power, and between language and ideology” (p. 393)

**2.5.1 Power and CDA**

The participants in the conversation are *unequal.* Example (6) below illustrates a situation where the turn-taking rules are not those of committee members supposedly treating each other as equals, but rather those of participants in an explicitly *unequal* encounter. (p. 394)

Example (6)

*Police officer is questioning a suspect about growing cannabis. The interview is aimed at establishing whether he was growing it for his own use or for sale.*

**1.** PO: okay you also told me that you haven’t got enough money to live on

**2.** is that right so that’s why you grow the cannabis

**3.** cos you haven’t got enough money

**4.** isn’t that what you said Sam

**5.** Sam: I’ve got enough money just to buy food and pay my way

**6.** PO: okay

**7.** Sam: but I ain’t got enough money to buy my extras that I need

**8.** PO: okay (0.5) so where are you growing that cannabis

**9.** Sam: near in my own backyard

**10.** PO: I thought you said that place didn’t belong to you

**11.** it belongs to the X organisation

**12.** Sam: yeah well I was growing it in the backyard in there

**Explanation**

In this unequal encounter, the police officer has the right to ask questions and to expect the suspect to answer them. In lines 1–4, the police officer first asks Sam to confirm something he has said earlier, *is that right* (line 2) and then *isn’t that what you said Sam* (line 4). Sam is not given a chance to respond to the first request for confirmation (there is no pause after *is that right)*, before the second proposition and request for confirmation are put to him. If you compare this interaction with a conversation with a friend, it is immediately apparent that this

technique could be interpreted as badgering and even verbally bullying Sam into a response. The police officer is here challenging Sam to confirm a proposition that will form the foundation for an argument that he needs to sell the cannabis he grows in order to survive. It appears that Sam does not see the trap, since he voluntarily reveals that he is in need of money for extras above bare sustenance (line 7).

The police officer then asks another question *where are you growing that cannabis* (line 8), and when Sam responds, the police officer challenges the accuracy of his response by referring to earlier information that he has supplied which contradicts the implications of this response that the place he is growing cannabis belongs to him. In any normal conversation, Sam’s use of the phrase *my own backyard* is understandable, given that it is the backyard of the place in which he is living. The police officer’s challenge thus reminds us that this is a formal interview where precision about such details is a legal issue.

In later sections of this interview, the police officer overtly challenges Sam with questions such as *what do you have to say Sam?* ; *come on Sam I’m asking you some straight questions;* *is that what you are saying?* ; *is that right, isn’t that what you said?* These features of the discourse clearly indicate that this is an unequal encounter (p. 394-395)

**2.5.2 Ideology and CDA**

CDA is used by researchers to uncover hidden messages and assumptions in the discourse. Most obvious areas of using CDA: advertisements, news items –researchers identify ways of manipulating readers and/or listeners: vocabulary choices, pronoun uses, etc. Consider the following example:

Example (7)

**(a)** Police shoot eleven people dead in pro-democracy demonstration.

**(b)** Rioting blacks shot dead as political leaders meet.

**Explanation**

The use of an active construction in (a) and the identification of the agent as the *police* conveys a very different impression from the passive construction in (b) where the agents have disappeared. The use of the word *rioting* in (b) could be read as implying that the shooting was justified, while the choice of *blacks* (vs *people)* objectifies those shot. Finally the inclusion of the information in (a) that the incident involved *a pro-democracy demonstration* communicates a very different message from the message conveyed in (b), where it is implied that the reason for the *rioting* is related to the meeting of political leaders.

A CDA approach focuses on the ways in which lexical choices such as *riot* vs *protest* vs *demonstration,* or *hooligans* vs *protestors* vs *demonstrators* subtly convey different ideological positions and different political sympathies. CDA researchers warn that as readers we are often unaware of the effect of such choices as we read apparently ‘objective’ news reports. (P: 397)

**Reference:**

Holmes, J (2013) *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics.* 4th Edition. London and New York: Routledge