

CHAPTER 10

Language and Social Interaction

DOUGLAS W. MAYNARD

ANSII PERÄKYLÄ

At least since Aristotle, language has been seen as distinctively human in its complexity. Ethologists have increased our appreciation of how other mammals—dolphins, chimpanzees, gorillas, and so on—employ sounds to signal one another in sophisticated ways, but humans, in conducting their everyday affairs, rely on spoken and gestural forms of intercourse to an unparalleled degree (Eibl-Eibesfeldt, 1989). Despite the centrality of language use in human society, social psychology textbooks often ignore the topic (Clark, 1985, p. 179), and when they do pay attention it is to regard language as a mode of communication or a vehicle whereby humans transmit information, including ideas, thoughts, and feelings, from one to another.

A variety of philosophers and social scientists regard the view of language as primarily communicative in function as the “conduit metaphor” (Reddy, 1979). This metaphor is rooted in the commonsensical notion that, through speech, one person conveys information by inserting it into words and sending them along a communicative channel. People receive the words at the other end and extract the encoded thoughts and feelings from them. The conduit metaphor reinforces an idea that problems of meaning in human society are essentially *referential* or concerned with how concepts correspond to or represent reality, and that language operates to make propositions about the world (Pitkin, 1972, p. 3). Instead of using the conduit metaphor and referential approach to meaning, scholars recently have approached language as a medium of organized social activity, in which words are “performatives” (Austin, 1962) or “deeds” (Wittgenstein, 1958, para. 546). It is partly through language that humans “do” the social world, even as the world is confronted as the unquestioned background or condition for activity. The conduit metaphor and “picture book” view of language, rather than the

DOUGLAS W. MAYNARD • Department of Sociology, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison, Wisconsin 53706

ANSII PERÄKYLÄ • Department of Sociology and Social Psychology, University of Tampere, Tampere, Finland

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more dynamic or activist approach, still heavily influence social psychological theory and research, however. This chapter begins with a review of general statements in social psychology about language, then examines language as action and the philosophical and social scientific background to this perspective. We review the so-called *mapping problem* or the question of how utterances become linked to social actions. Rule-based answers to this question include sociolinguistics and discourse analysis. In other perspectives—the frame analysis of Goffman, and discursive psychology—rules play a less dominant role. Finally, we discuss ethnomethodology and conversation analysis, in which rules are altogether abandoned as explanatory resources and investigators connect language to action through other means, such as the sequential organization of talk.

LANGUAGE IN SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

There are two main disciplinary “branches” to the field of social psychology—the psychological and the sociological (House, 1977). Along the psychological branch, it has been traditional to employ the conduit model of language. For example, a frequent topic along this branch is that of *persuasion*, and the well-known Yale communication model (Hovland, Harvey, & Sherif, 1953) poses a basic question about it: “Who says what to whom by what means?” This model, which has been modified by more recent, cognitively oriented models such as the elaboration likelihood and heuristic and systematic models (Chaiken, 1987; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986), includes four factors that are important to achieving persuasion—a communicator or source, a message, an audience, and a channel through which the message is conveyed. When, for example, audience members perceive a source as credible and trustworthy, they are more likely to be persuaded by what the source says. Over the years, such public figures as (in the United States) Eleanor Roosevelt, Ronald Reagan, and Bill Clinton have been seen as examples of persuasive source figures. Other “source” features including likeability, attractiveness, and expertise also affect how audiences evaluate messages. Besides features of a source, researchers have studied characteristics of messages (capacity to arouse emotion or fear, quantity and timing of messages, discrepancy between message and target’s own position, etc.), targets (mood, motivation, etc.) and situations for their influence on persuasiveness.

In the sociological branch of social psychology, symbolic interactionists have been most concerned with language. This is no doubt due to the influence of Mead (1934), who originated the suggestion that humans employ *significant symbols* that, when emitted by one party, elicit the same response in that party as in the party to whom the symbol is directed. This suggestion assumes significance in a larger context than social psychology, however. Sociologists regard communication as achieving a solution to “the problem of meaning,” which Weber (1947) long ago identified as being at the core of social action, for the defining criterion of such action is that it is a product of the interactive interpretations of society’s members. When Mead (1934) proposed the existence of significant symbols and the capacity for “taking the role of the other,” it seemed to represent a clear statement of how humans could form common understandings, produce mutual and complementary stances within what he called the “social act,” and also thereby provide for larger patterns of social life.

From ideas like Mead’s and a more general concern with the problem of meaning, it is easy to see how social psychologists moved to the conduit metaphor when discussing human language, seeing it as a repository of significant symbols in which people package their ideas and feelings. Significant symbols include not only words but gestures as well, although there

are two views of gestural communication. In one view, gestures are substituted for words. Thus, a hand wave stands for “hello,” a green light suggests “go,” a beckoning arm signifies “come on,” and so on (Hertzler, 1965, pp. 29–30). In the other view, gestures occupy a different “channel of communication” than words—a nonverbal one. In either view, because of the presumption that gestures encode referential meaning, the conduit metaphor is preserved. Although it is recognized that gestures and words are arbitrary and conventional and that they take on different senses according to the context in which they appear, individuals’ ability to encode their own experiences with words and gestures inexorably leads actors to share the same mental attitudes or states and to agree upon reference (Hewitt, 1997, pp. 30–38), which makes collaborative activity possible.

An influential variant of the communicational view of language is the famous Sapir–Whorf, or linguistic relativity, hypothesis. Benjamin Whorf, a student of the anthropologist Edward Sapir, studied the languages of American Indians and other groups, and argued that these languages conditioned the members’ life experiences. As a straightforward example (Whorf, 1956, p. 216) observes that the Hopi language has one word for everything that flies (except birds, which form another category), whereas English has separate nouns for insect, airplane, aviator, and so on. Thus, according to Whorf (1956, p. 218), actors “dissect” the world “along lines laid down by our native languages.” Despite the relativity it implies, the Whorfian hypothesis is compatible with the conduit metaphor and communicational view of language in that it proposes the very source of an individual’s experience.* Once individuals have learned the group’s language, they have acquired the symbolic means for having emotions, beliefs, perceptions, and so on and transmitting them to one another.

Of course, most social psychologists argue that language and experience reciprocally influence one another. Nevertheless, in studies where language is a prominent variable, it remains as a relatively static repository of meanings[†] that either conditions or is conditioned by those social factors of interest to the investigator. Later, we show that in traditional studies, social structure is often conveyed by the conduit of communication. Overall, then, language has been important to social psychology because it represents a vital medium whereby actors can communicate with one another and thereby set up joint projects according to preexisting social arrangements. In this view, the manipulation of significant symbols is a precursor to action and behavior is the product of linguistically achieved common understandings. A different view of language sees it as co-constitutive of social activity. That is, language and action are facets of a single process that participants collaboratively organize through their practices of speech and gesture.

LANGUAGE AND ACTION

The conduit metaphor implies that language is largely a vehicle whereby interactants make propositions about the world. From this perspective, which is explicit or implicit in traditional social psychological research on language, problems of meaning involve how well linguistic concepts refer to, correspond with, or represent reality, including internal thoughts and feelings.

*The Whorfian hypothesis suggests an iconic relation between language and thought—that is, that language determines thought. Early on, Lenneberg (1953) and Brown (1958) pointed out the logical flaws in this proposition. For a more recent critique, see Pinker (1994, chapter 3).

[†]This is true, as Boden (1990, p. 245) remarks, even in symbolic interactionist studies, which, despite interest in people’s *defining* activities, have accorded language very little direct attention.

A different idea—that language is a site of social activity—stems from developments in what is called ordinary language philosophy. A variety of scholars, including Austin, Ryle, Searle, and Wittgenstein, take the position that problems of meaning and reference in traditional philosophy—and, by extension, issues concerning how and under what conditions interactants communicate effectively with one another—can be fruitfully recast through investigation of ordinary language. This means avoiding the abstracting and generalizing process whereby words serve to reference or point to objects and situating words in orderly contexts to appreciate how words achieve actions.

Speech Act Theory

The title of John Austin's famous book, *How to Do Things with Words*, conveys the essence of speech act theory. Austin (1962, p. 12) questions "an old assumption in philosophy" that to say something is to state something in a propositional sense. Sentences that convey referential information, in Austin's words, form *locutionary* acts, but many utterances do not describe, state, or report anything. That is, they do not state anything and cannot be evaluated for their truth, but rather are *illocutionary* performances.* Examples, paraphrased from Austin (1962, p. 5), are:

- "I do" (take this woman to be my lawful wedded wife) (as uttered during a marriage ceremony)
- "I name this ship the *Queen Elizabeth*" (as uttered when smashing the bottle against the stem)
- "I give and bequeath my watch to my brother" (as occurring in a will)
- "I bet you it will rain tomorrow"

Such utterances do not report or describe what a person is doing; they achieve a designated activity, such as promising, naming, giving, or betting.

As Austin (1962, p. 100) reflected on the characteristics of performatives or illocutionary acts, he came to view locutionary acts in a new way. He proposed that the "occasion of an utterance matters seriously" and that to understand how it functions, the "context" in which it is spoken must be investigated together with the utterance itself (Austin, 1962, p. 98). That is, when we examine the *occasion* of locutionary or statement-like acts, we see that speakers are *using* them to ask or answer a question, give assurance or a warning, announce a verdict or intent, and so on. Accordingly, so-called "statements" also occur as some specific action—they are performative rather than referential. The lesson for the "communicational" view of language is that the locutions through which persons provide information about their thoughts, feelings, and ideas occur as part of some context of acting and are, like promising, naming, giving, and so on, illocutionary:

What we need to do for the case of stating, and by the same token, describing and reporting, is to take them a bit off their pedestal, to realize that they are speech-acts no less than all these other speech-acts that we have been mentioning and talking about as performative. (Austin, 1961, pp. 249–250)

*Austin (1962, p. 102) also discusses "perlocutionary acts," or utterances that are consequential in particular ways for the behavior of persons to whom they are directed, but this type need not concern us here. The distinction between illocutionary and perlocutionary acts is hazy (Levinson, 1983, p. 287).

Thus, Austin abandons the dichotomy between locutionary and illocutionary acts “in favor of more general families of related and overlapping speech acts.”

One of Austin’s successors, Searle (1969, pp. 16–17), more forcefully states that the “unit of linguistic communication is not, as has generally been supposed, the symbol, word, or sentence . . . but rather the production of the symbol or word or sentence in the performance of a speech act,” and that a theory of language, therefore, needs a theory of action. For Searle, this theory is one in which a set of underlying, constitutive rules specifies how speech acts can be accomplished.

Both Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) attempt to come to grips with the well-known problem in the philosophy of language that a sentence with a given reference and predication can have an assortment of meanings. In terms of speech act theory, the “same” utterance can perform a variety of different speech acts. Searle’s (1969, pp. 70–71) classic example is a wife reporting to her husband at a party, “It’s really quite late”:

That utterance may be at one level a statement of fact; to her interlocutor, who has just remarked on how early it was, it may be (and be intended as) an objection; to her husband it may be (and be intended as) a suggestion or even a request (“Let’s go home”) as well as a warning (“You’ll feel rotten in the morning if we don’t”).

Among speech act theorists, linking a given or “same” utterance to specific actions may involve what Austin (1962, pp. 15–24) called “felicity conditions,” or the set of circumstances that allow for the successful completion of a performative. Thus, for an act of promising to be effective, Austin (1962, pp. 21–22) suggests that the promisor must intend to promise, have been heard by someone, and be understood as promising. Incorporating and correcting theories of meaning (Grice, 1957; Strawson, 1964) that, somewhat like Austin, are based on speakers’ intentions, Searle (1969, 1975) provides a sophisticated system of rules whereby the “direct” or “indirect” action a given sentence is intended to initiate can be consummated. For example, rules or conventions, according to Searle (1969, pp. 57–61) specify how an uttered promise is produced, what the preparatory conditions are (e.g., that the promise stipulates an act for someone that would not occur in the normal course of events), that the speaker intends to do the act as an obligation, and that the hearer recognizes the utterance as it was meant. These rules can be related to what Grice (1975) has called “conversational implicature,” a set of maxims that underlie and provide for the cooperative use of language (Levinson, 1983, p. 241).

Language as a Form of Life

Another important figure, and perhaps the most influential, in the ordinary language tradition is Ludwig Wittgenstein, who in his own early work was deeply committed to logical positivism and the idea that the function of language is to represent objects in the world. Subscribing to the referential approach to meaning, Wittgenstein thought that the fundamental question about language was the truth or falsity of its propositions. The philosopher’s main task was to translate complex sentences into their elementary units in order to assess its truth or falsity (Pitkin, 1972, pp. 27–28). Later, Wittgenstein disavowed this approach and any rule-based approach to language, instead urging the examination of language *practice*—how actors employ words and sentences in concrete situations. Thus, in *Philosophical Investigations* and other posthumous publications, Wittgenstein (1958) argues that language, rather than being a vehicle for naming things, conveying information, or even enacting intentions according to rules, is an *activity or form of life* in its own right. For example, to analyze a single word in the language, and propose that there is a single definable class of phenomena to which it refers

is to neglect that descriptions can be a wide variety of things depending on the various roles the word plays in a multiplicity of *language games* (Wittgenstein, 1958, para. 24). Consider the word “hello,” which we might define as a *greeting*. However, its status as a greeting depends on *where*, in a developing conversation, the item occurs (Schegloff, 1986). When a party uses the word after picking up a ringing telephone, the activity it performs is *answering* a summons rather than greeting the caller. Subsequently, there may be an exchange or sequence of salutations, and in *that* context “hello” does perform greeting. To discover the meaning of a word, then, it is not possible to rely on ostensive or demonstrative or any other fixed definitions; one must examine the *contexts of use*. When contexts of use are similar, then words may be said to share what Wittgenstein (1958, para. 67) called “family resemblances.” It is in the actual practice of placing words in particular contexts that such resemblances can be traced and the lexical and other components of language appreciated as a form of life.

This emphasis on actual practice differs significantly from speech act theory, especially that of Searle. In Wittgenstein’s view, just as the word *hello* might appear in a variety of language games, so might the word *promise*, but rather than deriving its meaning from some underlying constitutive rules, the illocutionary force of the utterance in which it appears derives from its pragmatics, including both vocal and nonvocal signaling as it occurs within the patterning or “grammar” of diverse language games. From this perspective, an investigator would eschew attempts to derive the rules of illocutionary force or to obtain access to speaker intentions and instead would maintain an interest in the overt expressions and acts through which a word such as “promise” comes to life. Linguistic competence, in other words, consists not in following rules to realize intent but in systematically relating given lexical items to other pieces of vocal and bodily conduct that signal how such items are produced and understood.

The “Mapping” Problem

According to the speech act theorists, the language that humans use can help constitute an infinite variety of social actions (1969, p. 23). Austin (1962, p. 150) suggests that there are on the order of a thousand or so actions, while Wittgenstein (1958, para. 23) proposes that there are “innumerable” activities in which language plays a part, including but by no means limited to “ordering, describing, reporting, speculating, presenting results, telling a story, being ironic, requesting, asking, criticizing, apologizing, censuring, approving, welcoming, objecting, guessing, joking, greeting.” This list can be indefinitely extended and shows that, as all the speech act theorists would argue, the communicative function of language, wherein people refer to objects and report their thoughts or feelings about them in a verifiable way, is only one among many modes of linguistic usage.*

When social scientists regard language in this dynamic sense, as intimately bound with action, a seemingly simple problem still looms large for the investigator: How are we to know what the illocutionary force of an utterance is? It is not tenable that the performative aspect of an utterance is somehow built into its form, for the reason stated above—the “same” utterance can perform a variety of acts. Put differently, the “form” of a sentence or utterance is often misleading about its status as an activity. For example, Levinson (1983, p. 275) mentions *imperatives*, which, despite their grammatical structure as commands or requests, rarely

*In Katriel and Philipsen’s (1990) study, informants use “communication” in contrast to “small talk” to depict speech in relationships that are “close ... supportive,” and “flexible.”

appear as such in natural conversation. Rather, they occur “in recipes and instructions, offers (*Have another drink*), welcomings (*Come in*), wishes (*Have a good time*), curses and swearings (*Shut up*), and so on” That is, the linguistic form is subordinated to social action and interaction (Ochs, Schegloff, & Thompson, 1996). As Levinson (1983, p. 274) nicely formulates the problem of knowing the illocutionary force of an utterance, it is one of *mapping* speech acts onto utterances as they occur in actual contexts. As we have seen, in ordinary language philosophy, there are two main solutions to this mapping problem, one being the rule-based approach of Austin, Searle, Grice and others, and the other being the practice-based approach of Wittgenstein. In contemporary social science, we also find these two approaches.

SOCIOLINGUISTICS AND DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Although a number of sociologists, anthropologists, and linguists have affiliated with the term *sociolinguistics*, it is, as its name implies, a field linked to linguistics proper. Pioneers in sociolinguistics, such as Gumperz (1972), Hymes (1974), and Labov (1972b), were wrestling with a legacy of theorizing about language that posited its fundamental forms as being cognitive or minded phenomena. This legacy started with Ferdinand de Saussure’s (1962) famous distinction between *langue*, which comprises an underlying systematics across variations in social context, and *parole*, which consists of the actual speech that people produce. In de Saussure’s (1962) view, the proper focus of study was *langue*, the idea being that human cognition was the seat of linguistic structures and categories that guided people’s behavior. In contemporary times, Noam Chomsky (1965) has continued the cognitive legacy with his very influential notion of generative grammar, a set of psychologically based universal structures whose systematic transformations result in an infinite variety of human speech productions. With its emphasis on Cartesian mental properties, structural linguistics has always sought to decontextualize linguistic phenomena in favor of finding certain ideal properties of abstracted sentences. That is, the overwhelming tendency has been to view linguistic structure as extant outside of time and place and hence not subject to social influence.

Sociolinguists, following scholars such as Firth (1935), [Malinoswski] (1923), and others, were utterly dissatisfied with such a view. As Hymes (1974, pp. 2–3) has argued, the frame of reference of the *social* scientific investigation of language could not be linguistic forms in themselves, and must substitute the community context as a frame. Indeed, Labov (1972b, p. xiii) resisted the term sociolinguistics because he could not conceive of linguistic theory or method that did *not* incorporate a social component. The social component would include cultural values, social institutions, community history and ecology, and so on (Hymes, 1974, p. 3). While sociolinguists agree that social influence is crucial to understanding linguistic structure, there are different perspectives on the relationship between society and language (Grimshaw, 1974) and different strategies for investigating this relationship. The earliest sociolinguistic studies used dialect surveys to study speech variation among social networks and communities, finding that dialect variables were an excellent gauge of both social class and ethnic identity (Gumperz & Hymes, 1972, p. 12).

Variation in linguistic patterns is a prominent theme in sociolinguistics. Besides dialect usage, another example of variation is *code switching* (Ervin-Tripp, 1972), or the manner in which members of a single community juxtapose, in the same situation, speech belonging to different grammatical systems (Breitborde, 1983; Fishman, 1983; Gumperz, 1982). When a group, such as African American, Spanish-speaking, or Hindi-speaking minorities in the

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United States, is basically bilingual, the usual categories of class, ethnicity, education, and so on are not good predictors of code switching. Of course, survey studies can document situational (e.g., home vs. work) determinants of code switching in communities but are hard-pressed to explain within-situation exhibits of the phenomenon. *Interpretive sociolinguists* argue that code switching reflects speakers' ability to categorize situations, interlocutors, and social relationships and thereby to make inferences and judgments about the appropriate and relevant speech forms to produce. Whereas the presumption in sociolinguistic survey research is that language usage is normatively guided, interpretive studies propose that ethnographic investigation is necessary to define the *competence* with which interactants manipulate linguistic markers and devices to obtain their ordinary goals in everyday life (Gumperz, 1982, pp. 35–36):

The analyst's task is to make an in depth study of selected instances of verbal interaction, observe whether or not actors understand each other, elicit participants' interpretations of what goes on, and then (a) deduce the social assumptions that speakers must have made in order to act as they do, and (b) determine empirically how linguistic signs communicate in the interpretation process.

These strategies are compatible with Hymes's (1974) comprehensive outline of the "ethnography of communication," a way of collecting, categorizing, and analyzing the action-oriented linguistic events in a particular community to answer the basic questions of what these events are and how they work.

Sociolinguistics has been occupied with numerous topics surrounding code switching, including second language learning and the relation of diverse languages to self concept, personality, and status attitudes. Other classic topics in sociolinguistics are language conflict, loyalty, and maintenance and the structure and organization of pidgin and creole languages. Grimshaw (1974, p. 80) reviews the early literature comprehensively and suggests that sociolinguistics is a "hybrid discipline" that is "largely atheoretical."

Related to sociolinguistics, and representing an effort to become more theoretically sophisticated about the relationship between language and society, is the general category of linguistic *discourse analysis*.^{*} "Discourse" broadly includes both textual and spoken forms of language and refers to language production as it is organized external to the unitary sentence or clause (Stubbs, 1983). That is, discourse analysis is concerned with the orderly connections between clauses and sentences, rather than with the structuring of those units alone. Thus, as Coulthard (1977, p. 3) notes, discourse analysis overlaps partially with *pragmatics*, a subfield in linguistics that is distinguished from traditional concerns with syntax and semantics by the interest in how language users take the social context into account when producing and understanding speech forms. Discourse analysis, however, is multitopical and multidisciplinary, with scholars from anthropology, artificial intelligence, communications, philosophy, psychology, and sociology contributing to the enterprise (Stubbs, 1983; van Dijk, 1985).

One approach to discourse analysis is in Grimshaw's (1989) effort to transcend the linguistically oriented work of Labov and Fanshel (1977) by formalizing sociological variables as derived from a more inductive and ethnographic inquiry such as Cicourel's (1974) cognitive sociology. Grimshaw (1989) models the discourse process as involving

^{*}The term "discourse analysis" can be used to refer to a number of quite different research traditions. Along with the linguistic discourse analysis discussed here, there is historical discourse analysis that usually focuses on written texts (Armstrong, 1983; Foucault, 1979), "critical discourse analysis" which combines social criticism with the analysis of textual material (Fairclough, 1992), and the social psychological discourse analysis that has come to be called "discursive psychology" and will be discussed later in this chapter.

a “source,” or originator of some manipulative speech move, a “goal,” or target of the move, an “instrumentality,” which is the speech act itself, and a “result” or outcome that the source pursues. The particular speech act a source employs is constrained according to the three variables of power, affect, and utility. Power has to do with the relative statuses of parties, affect with the emotionality of their relationship, and utility with the value and costs to both the source and target of a speech act in achieving some result. Thus, Grimshaw’s (1989, pp. 532–533) approach complements Labov and Fanshel’s preoccupation with rules of *discourse* by emphasizing rules deriving from essentially social considerations of *appropriateness* as based on participants’ cultural and social knowledge. A less formalistic approach to describing discourse and its social parameters—how discourse as action involves topic selection, overall or schematic organization, local meanings, choice of words, style, and rhetorical devices—can be found in van Dijk (1997). Viewing discourse as action, van Dijk (1997) also stresses the importance of context and power in the analysis of text and talk.

GOFFMAN AND FRAME ANALYSIS

Sociolinguistics and discourse analysis emphasize the importance of micro-analysis of minute particles of speech and single interactional events as a means for understanding the social dimensions of language use.* Both areas invoke rule-like mechanisms for connecting social environments and structures to these particles and events. In Goffman (1983)’s work, we begin to see less emphasis on the connective or even causal approach to rules and more concern with social actors’ agency and rule usage. Rather than a broader social context, the corporeal “face to face” or “body to body” situation—whether in urban or in rural areas, in a business or in a family, and independent of socioeconomic class, gender or ethnic categories—should be the primary focus for understanding social interaction. That is, the same rules and conventions, applying to turn-taking, physical distance between speakers, and other matters, prevail in social interaction regardless its broader context. Or to take a more specific example: Goffman (1983) refers to a “contact” ritual, such as any service encounter where customers may form a queue as they await their turn at being helped. Although the queue could be organized according to externally structured attributes of involved parties (e.g., age, race, gender, or class), normal queuing “blocks” or filters out the effects of such variables in favor of an egalitarian, first-come, first-serve ordering principle.

Such an ordering principle belongs to what Goffman (1983) calls the “interaction order,” which consists of “systems of enabling conventions, in the sense of ground rules for a game, the provisions of a traffic code, or the syntax of a language.” The interaction order is relatively autonomous order of organization both in relation to the broader social organization and to the psychological properties of the actors. Hence, Goffman wanted to promote it as a target of social scientific study in its own right. Although the interaction order consists largely of rules or conventions, violations do not threaten the game or the language as much as they serve as resources for accomplishing the very projects that adherence itself involves, including the definition of self and the creation or maintenance of social meaning (Goffman, 1971, p. 61):

Given that a rule exists against seeking out a stranger’s eyes, seeking can then be done as a means of making a pickup or as a means of making oneself known to someone one expects to meet but is unacquainted with. Similarly, given that staring is an invasion of information preserve, a stare

*For overviews see Drew (1988), Burns (1992), and Manning (1992).

can then be used as a warranted negative sanction against someone who has misbehaved—the misbehavior providing and ensuring a special significance to overlong examination.

Actors, in this view, do not range between naive conformity and blatant rule breaking. Rules, says Goffman (1971, p. 61) make possible a *set* of “nonadherences,” which, according to how we classify the interactional work they do, have a variety of meanings.* The interactional rules do not tightly constrain actions; they are more like rough guidelines that permit actors to accomplish a variety of social projects, depending on how they align themselves with respect to those rules or guidelines.

This point about actors’ capacity for flexible alignment to rules is most fully developed in *Frame Analysis*, Goffman’s (1974) major treatise on the “organizational premises” of ordinary activity, or, the “reality” of everyday experience. Much of everyday experience goes beyond literal activity and has numerous figurative aspects, which are especially visible in talk (Goffman, 1974, p. 502). In particular, Goffman (1974, chapter 13) argues that rather than using terms such as *speaking* and *hearing* to characterize the production and understanding of utterances, analysts must see how participants align themselves to those utterances. A speaker, for instance, may employ a variety of *production formats* when talking, so that he/she says something as *principal* (one whose position is represented in the talk) or as *animator* (who simply speaks the words representing another’s position).

As principal or animator, one can also project a particular identity or figure (ranging from that of the speaker to identities of fictitious and actual others). Finally, a speaker can be a strategist who acts to promote the interests of an individual on whose behalf he/she is acting. In a way complementary to speakers, hearers also take up different alignments or participation statuses—ratified recipient, overhearer, eavesdropper, and so on. Eventually, Goffman (1979) referred to the frame analysis of talk as an investigation of the “footing” or stances that participants constantly change over the course of an utterance’s production. Goffman’s work on footing has been taken up in a variety of contemporary studies, including those on children’s arguments (Goodwin, 1988; Goodwin, 1990), the news interview (Clayman, 1988), and the survey interview (Houtkoop-Steenstra, 2000).

DISCURSIVE PSYCHOLOGY

Discursive psychology is a European social psychological approach that focuses on language use, taking an “action oriented” understanding of language as its point of departure. This approach has been developed since late 1980s, by scholars such as Billig (1987), Edwards (1997, 1992), Potter (1996, 1987) and Antaki (1994). In their writings, discursive psychologists strongly question the “cognitivist” presuppositions predominant in current psychology. The cognitivism attacked by discursive psychologists actually coincides with the “conduit metaphor.” In cognitivism, “we start with a given, external world, which is then perceived and processed, and *then put into words*” (Edwards, 1997, p. 19). In this view, language is understood as a transparent medium used for transfer of ideas concerning the external reality and inner worlds of humans. To counter this, discursive psychologists study *accounts* and *accounting*—how everyday descriptions of people, their behavior, and their mental states are

*Indeed, actors’ orientation to the interaction order remains moral, resting on commitments that in one way or another (through adherence or violation) enable the self to emerge and be preserved. On this point, see Goffman (1971, pp. 185–187); for secondary discussion, see Rawls (1987, pp. 42–44).

in themselves actions (Antaki, 1994). Descriptions are produced in particular occasions to do particular things, such as blaming, justifying, explaining, and so on (Buttny, 1993).

The work of discursive psychologists has drawn inspiration from the social studies of scientific knowledge: for example, Bloor (1976), Mulkay (1979), Woolgar (1988), and others, who sought to show that the “factuality” of scientific knowledge is embedded in a set of discursive and rhetorical practices. The discursive social psychologist examines how our mundane understanding of the world and people in it are similarly socially located in such practices (Edwards, 1997, pp. 51–83; Potter & Wetherell, 1987, pp. 146–155). As the last section of this chapter will make apparent, this research program is much in debt to Garfinkel’s ethnomethodology. The themes of discursive psychology include *descriptions of courses of action*, *descriptions of mind*, and *descriptions of identities*.

Accounts of Courses of Action

Everyday language use frequently involves descriptions of courses of action: accounts of the speaker’s and others’ ordinary conduct. Citing Schegloff (1989), and like Potter and Wetherell (1987, pp. 74–94), Edwards (1997, p. 8) points out that “accounts of actions are invariably, and at the same time, accounts for actions.” Two distinct aspects of these accounts involve *scripts* and *dispositions* (Edwards, 1997, pp. 142–169). In describing events in terms of scripts, the speakers often implicitly (and sometimes explicitly) propose that what happened followed a routine pattern in the given circumstances. The course of action is then presented as expected, as ordinary, as “natural” one that follows a script. On the other hand, events can also be described as *breaches* from the script, as something unusual and not to be expected. When events are describing as breaches from the script, dispositions often come into play. Dispositions are “pictures” of the actor implied by the description of the course of action. Two relevant dimensions of dispositions include the personality and the moral character of the actor. Deviations from scripts are often linked to specific dispositions of the actor. However, scripted courses of action can also be linked to dispositions, not least to dispositions of “normality.”

Cognitive social psychologists (Heider, 1958; Mandler, 1984; Shaver, 1983) also discuss scripts and dispositions, as principles that organize perception, inference, and memory. However, discursive psychologists take a unique approach to these phenomena. Unlike cognitivists, they emphasize that course-of-action descriptions are designed to *exhibit* the routine or breaching character of the events, and to build the corresponding disposition of the actor. Thus, in discursive psychology, scripts and dispositions are seen as *resources* used by speakers in pursuing their local interactional goals (Edwards & Potter, 1992, pp. 77–126).

Accounts of Mind

Description of mind is another facet of ordinary talk (Coulter, 1989). Discursive psychologists are interested specifically in the ways in which the participants’ states of knowledge figure in talk (Edwards, 1997, pp. 114–141, 170–201). They examine how emotional and cognitive states are practically accomplished, and how local interactional goals are pursued in and through them. Cognitive states are achieved, for example, through the ways in which statements, stories and descriptions are designed and received in conversation. As conversation analysts (see the section below) have shown, speakers design their talk carefully to show

their understanding of the recipients' prior knowledge, and correspondingly, the recipients show through their own action whether the things that were told were new information or already known by them (Sorjonen, 2001).

Discursive psychology also investigates descriptions of affect, or the ways in which speakers avow their own emotions and ascribe them to others. In line with other social constructionist approaches (Harré, 1986), research centers on the use of emotion *words* (rather than non-lexical expression of emotion), to show how they are used (Edwards, 1997, p. 170):

in assigning causes and motives of action, in blamings, excuses, and accounts ... Emotional states may figure as things to be accounted for (in terms of prior causal events or dispositional tendencies, say), as accounts (of subsequent actions and events), and also as evidence of what kind of events or actions precede or follow them.

Thus, emotion descriptions are seen as an essential resource in accounting *of* and accounting *for* action. Moreover, as Edwards (1997, p. 171) points out, emotion descriptions are closely tied with scripts and dispositions. Emotion descriptions can be embedded on routine scripts (when a particular event, such as having a child, wakes a particular emotion, such as happiness). They can also be part of dispositions, for example, when a specific emotion, such as inclination towards jealousy, explains non-routine courses of action.

Accounts of Identity

Identity is the third central theme in discursive psychology. In and through their talk, speakers present themselves, those that they talk to, and those that they talk about, as having particular identities, as being particular persons and particular sorts of persons. Just like mental states discussed above, also the identity is, as Antaki and Widdicombe (1998, p. 1) put it, both an *achievement* and a *tool*: identity is achieved in and through the talk, and it is used as a tool in performing particular actions in talk. Or to put it in terms used by Edwards and Potter (1992, p. 192), "... detailed language of describing persons is a resource for action." For example, in blaming the other or in defending one's own (or the other's) actions, speakers ascribe and avow particular motives and personality features, and thereby construct identities (Potter & Wetherell, 1987, pp. 110–115).

Drawing on Sacks' work (see the section on conversation analysis below),* Antaki and Widdicombe (1998, pp. 3–6) emphasize the centrality of *categorization* in the construction of identity: "to have an identity" entails being "cast into a category with associated characteristics or features." Categories can, of course, be numerous, the most general ones including age, ethnic, gender and professional categories. In investigating categorization, Antaki and Widdicombe (1998) point out, a key challenge is to show how a particular categorization is *oriented to* by the interactants, and how this orientation is *consequential* for their joint courses of action.

"Description as action" is the primary topic of research in discursive psychology. Three broad and interrelated areas of description are accounts of courses of action, accounts of mind, and accounts of identities. In all these fields, discursive psychologists seek to show how the design and reception of descriptions contributes to particular social actions. This research programme, of course, raises once again the above mentioned "mapping problem": on which

*For discussion of Sacks' work on membership categorization devices, see Hester and Francis (2000) and Watson (2000).

basis can we say that a particular type of description contributes to a particular social action? In recent years, the research methodology of discursive psychologists has come very close to that in ethnomethodology and conversation analysis. Therefore, the ways in which discursive psychology deals with the mapping problem are more or less the same as those in conversation analysis, and we can postpone the discussion on them until we have introduced conversation analysis in more detail.

ETHNOMETHODOLOGY AND CONVERSATION ANALYSIS

Ethnomethodology proposes that there is a self-generating order in everyday activities (Garfinkel, 1967) and takes a unique approach to the problem of mapping utterances onto actions in at least two ways. First, where Goffman's frame analysis relaxed the theoretical hold that rules could have in explaining linguistic conduct, ethnomethodology, arguing that rules can be treated as topics and features of the activities they are said to organize, utterly extricates rules from theory per se. That is, in ethnomethodology there is no attempt to explain linguistic or other behavior by reference to rules. Instead, the analytic tactic is to treat rules as *resources* for actors, who use them for various situated projects and ends of their own. Whether abstract conformity or deviance occurs has to do with what works to accomplish these projects and ends. It is not that behavior is unconstrained, disorderly, or arbitrary, but that rules, if they are operative at all, figure as part of actors' own practices of reasoning and ways of organizing a social setting. Members are artful *users* of rules, often invoking them in an *ex post facto*, rhetorical manner to describe the morality of some way of life. For example, jurors invoke legal standards to depict *ex post facto* how they arrived at a verdict, even when the route involved substantial common-sense, non-standardized reasoning (Garfinkel, 1967), residents at a halfway house use the "convict code" to account for disregard of the official ways of doing things (Wieder, 1974), and staff members at a social welfare agency get their "people processing" job done, in part, through departing from routine policies and still providing a "sense" of having conformed (Zimmerman, 1970). In language-oriented research, ethnomethodologists study how "normative assertions" (Maynard, 1985) operate in the context of already organized group activities to further such local purposes as accusing, competing, and according membership. Rules, to repeat, are features of actions rather than explanations for them.

Another unique aspect of ethnomethodological research is its concern with "indexical expressions" (Garfinkel, 1967; Garfinkel & Sacks, 1970), or utterances whose meaning and understandability depend on the context or circumstances in which they appear. That "deictic" utterances, such as "this," "that," "here," "there," and so on, assume particular meaning according to their speech environment is generally recognized, but Garfinkel (1967) argued that all talk is, without remedy, indexical and context-dependent. One major, orderly aspect of "context" is an utterance's sequential placement. Conversation analysis theorizes that an utterance's force as an action of a particular type derives from such placement (Heritage, 1984, p. 242; Maynard & Clayman, 1991, pp. 397-400). Thus, rather than linguistic or social rules, sequential organization has primary analytic utility in describing talk as action and its relation to "interaction" as well (Schegloff, 1991). Overall, ethnomethodology and conversation analysis have affinities with the Wittgensteinian "form of life" approach to the mapping problem, in which actual, orderly linguistic practice (rule usage and sequence organization) is brought to the fore of analytic inquiry.

With its commitment to the study of naturally occurring talk, conversation analysis in particular aims to rebuild sociology as a natural observational science (Sacks, 1984, 1992a). Indeed, in pursuing this goal, conversation analysts have generated a sizable research literature over the past 35 years (Clayman & Gill, Forthcoming; Goodwin & Heritage, 1990; Heritage, 1984, Chapter 8; ten Have, 1999). Furthermore, in maintaining a commitment to examining naturally occurring social action, conversation analysis avoids treating language as a variable to be manipulated, tested, or related to other variables. We explore the implications of this stance in the next section. Here, the point is that conversation analysts' major social scientific concern has been with endogenous (internally orderly) features of "talk-in-interaction" (Schegloff, 1991). There are three principal domains in which the analysis of endogenously structured conversation is grounded: the organization of sequences, turn taking, and repair.

Organization of Sequences

It is well established that conversational interaction occurs in a serial fashion, with participants taking turns in an A–B–A–B–A–B... ordering. However, parties collaboratively structure the ordering rather tightly. This structure is sequence organization, exemplified in the *adjacency pair*, which includes such conversational objects as question–answer, request–grant/refusal, and invitation–acceptance/declination sequences. Adjacency pairs have the following characteristics (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973): (1) they are a sequence of two-utterance length, which are (2) adjacent to one another, (3) produced by different speakers, (4) ordered as a first part and a second part, and (5) typed, so that a first part requires a particular second part or a range of second parts.

Moreover, adjacency pairs are characterized by "conditional relevance"—conditional on the occurrence of an item in the first slot, or first pair-part (e.g., the question), the occurrence of an item in the second slot, or second pair-part (e.g., the answer to the question), is expected and required. Consider an example of requesting (Wootton, 1981, p. 62, simplified):

Child: Can I have a wee drink while I'm waiting?
 Mother: Yes, you can.

The absence of a second pair-part may occasion a repeat of the first pair-part and perhaps "warranted inferences" concerning coparticipants who seem nonresponsive (e.g., that they are being "evasive"). In the next example a child reissues the request for sweets when the mother does not respond to the first request. In other words, a response is expected, and when it does not occur it is *noticeably absent* (colons denote stretching of the preceding sound) (Wootton, 1981, p. 66, simplified):

Child: Mom, I want some swee::ties.
 [11.4 seconds silence]
 Child: I want so:me: swee::ties.
 [Child moves rapidly towards sweets; 2.5 seconds silence]
 Child: There's not any::: ...
 [Child finds no sweets in their normal location]
 Mother: You'll get some after.

The noticeable absence of the mother's reply is evident in the way the child pursues talk and moves toward the object of his request until the mother deals with it—that is, answers him.

That second pair-parts are required, does not mean answers or replies always occur in a sequential position adjacent to the specific questions or requests (or first pair-parts) they are addressing. Often, participants produce *insertion sequences* between first and second pair-parts, as in invitation sequences, for example, where a recipient may need pertinent details before providing a reply (Schegloff, 1972, p. 78):

- A: Are you coming tonight?
 B: Can I bring a guest?
 A: Sure.
 B: I'll be there.

Additionally, when second pair parts do not occur, it may reflect other actions of the recipient, such as “ignoring” insistent demands, “snubbing,” or otherwise resisting the initial action. Importantly, inferences concerning these kinds of other actions are made by the participants of interaction themselves, not, in the first place, by the analyst.

Turn-Taking Organization

The A–B–A–B serial ordering of sequences also involves a recurring transfer of speakership. The ordering of speaker change, as well as the size and content of a speaker's turn, is not predetermined in ordinary conversation but instead is free to vary (Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974). Moreover, change of speakership is so tightly articulated that both gap and overlap are minimized (see Lerner [1989] and Schegloff [2000] for elaboration on the social organization of overlap). Consider the following example, which exhibits extremely close turn transitions—the equal signs denote immediate “latching” of one utterance to the other (Jefferson, 1986, p. 154, simplified):

- EMMA: G'morning Letitia=
 LOTTIE: =uh How're YOU=
 EMMA: = =FI:NE

This finely tuned coordination by participants is made possible through the projection of possible completion points in any one turn. Hearers anticipate exactly when speakers may complete a current utterance, which enables precision timing in the start of next turns.

The projection of a possible completion point is just one social organizational feature of turn taking, however, which relates to the issue of “who will speak next” on some occasion. To determine this, participants methodically allocate turns of talk through a set of ordered options, including current speaker selecting the next speaker, the next speaker self-selecting, or current speaker continuing to speak (Sacks et al., Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974). Through projecting the completion points of current turns and precisely timing the start of new turns, participants achieve hearing and understanding as an ongoing feature of ordinary talk.

Organization of Repair

Given this elaborate and systematic organization of sequences and turns within sequences, how are interactional troubles managed? That is, how do participants handle errors, mishearings, glitches in turn transition, problems of meaning, and the like? The answer is that the turn-taking system itself provides resources for understanding as well as “repair” (Levinson,

1983, pp. 340–342; Schegloff, Jefferson, & Sacks, 1977). In coordinating exchange of speakership and tightly articulating sequences, participants display for one another their sense of a current vocal action in the very next turn at talk. Consider this as a “proof procedure”: the second speaker’s turn serves as a resource by which the first speaker may check whether a turn was heard correctly. In the next example, Marcia is, according to Schegloff (1992, p. 1301), explaining to her exhusband why their son is flying home rather than driving:

- (1) MARCIA: ... Becuz the top was ripped off of his car which is to say somebody helped themselves.
 (2) TONY: Stolen.
 (3) MARCIA: Stolen. Right out in front of my house.

In turn 2, Tony offers a candidate understanding (“stolen”) of Marcia’s ambiguous reference in turn (1) to the top being “ripped off” their son’s car. Then, in turn (3), Marcia confirms Tony’s candidate understanding. Had Tony not been correct in his understanding, this is a point at which Marcia could have repaired the trouble. In general, the third turn such as this is a slot that may be taken up with the business of repairing various interactional troubles (Heritage, 1984, pp. 254–258; Levinson, 1983, p. 340; Schegloff, 1992, p. 1302). This is not the first opportunity in the sequence for repair initiation, however, for participants might well repair their own utterances in their own first turn at talk or in the transition between turns. Indeed, as Schegloff (1992, pp. 1300–1301) notes about the above episode, Marcia appears to have used “which is to say somebody helped themselves” to clarify “ripped off,” a phrase that could be ambiguous as between a literal meaning and an idiomatic expression for robbery. This is termed a “self-initiated self-repair.” Also, in the second turn in the sequence it is possible for the second speaker to repair aspects of the first speaker’s turn (Schegloff et al., 1977). Thus, turn taking and the organization of repair in the system of turn taking provide a structural basis for the achievement of intersubjectivity or mutual understanding (Sacks et al., 1974; Schegloff, 1992).

The explication of these three domains of the social organization of conversation (sequences, turn taking, and repair) provides the basis for much of the vigorous research agenda in conversation analysis and has generated an expansive literature on talk in institutional and organizational settings. We now consider this literature, along with other research on the relation between language, action, and social structure.

LANGUAGE, ACTION, AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Thus far, we have concentrated on *interaction*, suggesting that social psychology benefits from understanding how parties use language in an immediate sense to perform joint endeavors of all sorts. Of course, as parties talk and gesture to one another, more than completely local interests and social organization may be at stake, and this means that questions regarding “social structure” come to the fore. Following Zimmerman and Boden’s (1991) reflections on talk and social structure, there are three approaches to probing the interrelation of language, action, and social structure: macrodirectional, dialectical, and reflexive.

Macrodirectional Approach: Social Categories and Language Use

Investigators often see social structure as consisting of such forms as age, gender, class, and other sociodemographic categories, as well as culture, institutions, and complex organizations,

which condition the use of language in specifiable ways. "In such a framework," Zimmerman and Boden (1991, p. 5) remark, "talk and, indeed, all interaction of actual actors in social situations is seen as a *product* of those social forces." This is the strategy in experimental and survey-based social psychology that examines how social structural arrangements *condition* language and social interaction, and emphasizes the relationship between social statuses or categories (e.g., race, gender, class, and age) and language. Perhaps the best known work in this area is that of Bernstein (1961, 1972), who proposed that middle and working-class children learn two very different linguistic "codes"—an "elaborated" and "restricted" code, respectively, with the features of each determined by the forms of social relations in different communities. Middle-class subcultures assert the primacy of the individual "I" over collective "we," which results in an elaborated code characterized by flexible organization and a range of syntactic options. In contrast, in working-class communities the collective "we" is used over the "I," and the result is a restricted, more rigid code with low levels of syntactic and vocabulary selection, and implicit rather than explicit meanings (Bernstein, 1972, pp. 475–476). These two class-based codes, Bernstein argues, help account for middle-class children's success and working-class children's lack of success in school.

Bernstein's argument generated a vigorous response. Portraying Bernstein's analysis of elaborated and restricted codes as a "deficit model," Labov (1972a) demonstrates that the "nonstandard English" spoken in U.S. African American communities is not "restricted" in its flexibility or range of options for syntax or vocabulary and, in certain ways, exhibits impressive linguistic, social, and cultural complexity and competence on the part of the speakers. More recently, Goodwin (1990) shows how skilled urban African American youth are in various linguistic activities (especially disputing) whereby they display and generate "character" and achieve localized social organization. Thus, Labov (1972a) has argued that there is no relationship between language use or the "codes" employed in poor and working-class African American communities and failure in school. Instead, "failure" may lay within the school as a social institution that does not adapt to the cultures of the diverse communities it serves. Controversy about whether linguistic repertoires represent "differences" or "deficits" continues (Baugh, 1999; Edwards, 1979; Giles & Robinson, 1990).

Studies of the relationship between language and social stratification are related to numerous comparisons of speech practice—based on cross-cultural, gender, and ethnic differences. Perhaps most prominent are investigations of linguistic divergences between women and men. Early research suggested that women are more expressive in intonation; that they use more adjectives and intensifiers, including *so*, *such*, *quite*, *vastly*, and *more*; that they make more precise determinations of color (Key, 1972); that they employ more fillers, such as *umh* and *you know*; and that they more often use affectionate address terms, such as *dear honey*, and *sweetie* (West & Zimmerman, 1985, p. 106). As it turns out, when researchers examine these items as simple markers or indicators of female speech, only two show any consistent patterning: compared to men, women produce speech in phonetically more correct forms (Thorne & Henley, 1975, p. 17) and vary their pitch and intonation more (West & Zimmerman, 1985, p. 107). Even the tradition of research on interruptions that West and Zimmerman (1983) initiated has shown few regular results (Aries, 1996), as other status and power differences (Kollock, Blumstein, & Schwartz, 1985) as well as processes intrinsic to the interaction (Okamoto & Smith-Lovin, 2001), including participation rates and manner (topic-changing behavior) may overshadow a characteristic such as gender. Still, differences between men's and women's speech appear to be enough for Tannen (1990) to propose that males and females speak different "genderlects." Consistent with this is evidence that females are more likely to interpret remarks *indirectly* rather than *directly* (Holtgraves, 1991), and that men may initiate more "unilateral" (as compared "collaborative") topic changes in interaction

(Ainsworth-Vaughn, 1992; West & Garcia, 1988). Research on linguistic differences based on gender, ethnicity, age, and other social categories has proliferated (Giles & Robinson, 1990) and no doubt will continue to do so.

Talk and Social Structure: Dialectics and Reciprocal Influence

A dialectical approach to talk and social structure involves social structure as cause *and* outcome of spoken interaction; language is the site of the production and reproduction of sociodemographic, cultural, institutional, and organizational forms characteristic of the overall society. It is therefore important to know both the local and broad context in which utterances occur, making it incumbent on the investigator to engage in ethnographic inquiry to complement the analysis of recorded speech. This premise is central to cognitive sociology (Cicourel, 1981), and it informs the work of students of talk in such institutional settings as preschools (Corsaro, 1979, 1996), schools (McDermott, Gospodinoff, & Aron, 1978; Mehan, 1979; Phillips, 1982), universities (Grimshaw, 1989), doctor's offices or hospitals (Cicourel, 1981; Fisher, 1983; Silverman, 1987; Strong, 1979; Waitzkin, 1991), and courts (Danet, 1980; Molotch & Boden, 1985). As an example of this approach, Mehan (1991) argues that the "social facts" of school systems derive from the "practical work" of educators engaged in interaction with students, parents, and other professionals in a series of "microevents" that occur in the classroom, testing sessions, and meetings. The dialectical approach is also compatible with the work of European theorists such as Bourdieu (1991), Giddens (1984), and Habermas (1979) and their concerns with language, ideology, and social reproduction.

Talk and Social Structure: Reflexivity between Interactional and Institutional Orders

A reflexive analysis of language, action, and social structure sees the interaction order and the institutional order having complex interrelationships not adequately described in causal or even reciprocally causal terms. The interaction order is comprised of mechanisms of turn taking and other sequential organizations, which provide the resources for producing and understanding what is being said and done in concert (Zimmerman & Boden, 1991, p. 9). As Goffman (1983) pointed out, the interaction order and its constituent devices are basic or primordial in the sense of underlying, preceding, being organized independently of any social structural context in which talk occurs, and being invariant although with sensitivity to historical and cultural variation.*

If the interaction order is primordial in this sense, it behooves investigators to analyze its workings as a prelude to explicating the use of language in institutional settings. When investigators do not do so, they risk attributing features of the talk to its institutional surround and missing both the bedrock of orderliness that makes it possible for participants to understand one another at all (no matter what the setting) and the ways in which they display the relevance of social structure through procedural "work" that is visible in the details of their talk (Schegloff, 1991). Conversation analysts, who take this position, have shown its implications in various ways. One implication is that the fundamental organization of conversational turn

*See, for example, recent studies of Japanese talk-in-interaction and how basic turn design, turn-taking and other mechanisms are adapted to this language (Mori, 1999; Tanaka, 1999).

taking may be different in institutional as compared with ordinary settings. Thus, where in conversation turn size, turn content, and turn order are free to vary and are subject to local management, in settings such as courtrooms (Atkinson & Drew, 1979), the jury deliberation (Manzo, 1996), classrooms (McHoul, 1978; Mehan, 1979) and testing (Marlaire & Maynard, 1990), news interviews (Clayman & Heritage, *In press*), clinical settings (Peräkylä, 1995), and the survey interview (Maynard, Houtkoop-Steenstra, Schaeffer, & Zouwen, 2002), this is not the case. Attorneys, teachers, newscasters, clinicians, or survey interviewers *ask* questions, and witnesses, students, interviewees, patients, or respondents must *answer*. From these elemental observations, a wide range of consequences follow in regard to how professionals, in collaboration with lay and other participants, organize such actions as accusing and denying in the courtroom, teaching, testing, and showing learning ability in the classroom, being “neutral” and expertly informative in the news interview, eliciting talk about delicate and sensitive personal matters in the clinic, or achieving the “standardization” of social measurement in the survey interview.*

It is not just alterations in turn taking that characterize institutional talk. Another implication of regarding conversation as primordial is that some mundane conversational sequences might be imported more or less wholesale as a resource for tasks that actors in institutional settings face recurrently. Thus, in medical settings, physicians and others are occupationally predisposed to having to deliver “bad news” in the form of diagnostic information. Maynard (1991) identified a *perspective display series* that, in ordinary conversation, involves one party asking another about some social object, whereupon the first party presents a report or assessment that is then regularly outfitted to agree with the second party’s. This way of producing a report or assessment is an inherently cautious maneuver, in that a speaker can elicit, in a preliminary manner, some display from a recipient of how well the speaker’s own information or opinion meshes with the recipient’s. Overall, this means that the perspective display series permits delivery of such information or opinion in a way that proposes a mutuality of perspective between speaker and recipient. In medical settings, where severe illness and death are customary topics, the perspective display series and its orderly features can be adapted to handling these topics. Clinicians, rather than presenting a diagnosis or death announcement straightforwardly, often take the more circuitous route of eliciting the view of their recipient before reporting the bad news, and then agreeably shape the news to the recipient’s knowledge and beliefs. At the very least, this works to promote the recipient’s understanding of what may be technically difficult jargon or terminology. In addition, it co-implicates the recipient’s perspective in the presentation of the news, so that clinicians can give a diagnosis in a publicly affirmative and nonconflicting manner.

Still another implication of treating conversation as a primordial backdrop to institutional language is that actors can change the ordering of intact sequences of talk in systematic ways. In a comprehensive analysis of openings to ordinary telephone calls, Schegloff (1986) distinguished four core opening sequences—the summons/answer sequence (consisting of a ringing phone and its answer), the identification/recognition sequence, the greeting, and the “how are you.” After participants produce these four sequences, they enter into the “first topic” of the call. As Whalen and Zimmerman (1987) compared a corpus of calls to emergency (“9-1-1”) dispatch centers with Schegloff’s analysis, they noticed that the organization consisting of these four sequences was modified so that (a) identification of the

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*For recent book-length treatments in which the reflexive approach to interactional an institutional orders informs the analysis, see Clayman (*In press*), Heritage and Maynard (Forthcoming). For a secondary and general summary of the approach, see Arminen (Forthcoming).

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dispatch center occurs as part of answering the summoning phone ring, and (b) the “first topic” (a request for assistance) occurs immediately after the summons answer sequence. Participants dispense with other forms of recognition, with greetings, and with “how are you’s.” Following Heritage (1984, pp. 238–240), Whalen and Zimmerman (1987) argue that (a) represents a *specialization* of ordinary conversational procedure, and (b) indicates a *reduction* of the core opening sequences.

Thus, the interaction order of talk, what Whalen and Zimmerman (1987) call an “interactional machinery,” is intimately involved in the means whereby, in institutional settings, participants “exhibit for one another (and for the analyst) their appreciation of who, situationally speaking, they are, and what, situationally speaking, they are up to.” That is, in and through modifications to the interaction order, participants also produce the institutional order. These orders are distinct and yet related in complex ways. A reflexive approach to language, action, and social structure, then, means understanding how sequential organization and other aspects of the interaction order can be deployed in ways that are sensitive to the contingencies and relevances of a society’s organizational and institutional settings. This might be through alterations to turn taking, particularized adoption of ordinary conversational sequences and series, discrete changes to the ordering of sequences, and other procedural means yet to be discovered and analyzed.”

CONCLUSION

Language is a primary medium of social behavior and, as such, deserves center stage in the panoply of social psychological topics. Indeed, other topics in social psychology, including exchange, bargaining, justice, socialization, deviance, health, ethnic relations, and collective behavior, necessarily involve interactive speech processes, which makes language use perhaps the most basic of social psychological phenomena. This is, we have argued, not so much because language is a vehicle of communication; rather, it is a resource for activity. One activity humans sometimes perform is “communicating” information of various kinds, but this is one among many other activities, such as arguing, promising, requesting, apologizing, joking, and greeting.

Influenced by ordinary language philosophy, recognizing that words do not have stable “meanings,” and that the “same” utterance has different interpretations according to its context of use, language-oriented researchers therefore wrestle with the basic question of how utterances perform specifiable actions. Sociolinguists and discourse analysts answer this question in one way by suggesting that some combination of linguistic and social rules link words and activities together. This answer comes close to the theoretical model provided by the speech act theory of Austin and Searle. Frame analysts also presume some normative connection between utterances and actions, while giving freer rein to actors’ strategic calculations and decision making in regard to rule adherence. Ethnomethodologists, conversation analysts, and discursive psychologists argue that in their ongoing conduct, participants themselves are users of rules who make normative assertions in the service of performing various activities. Rules, therefore, are only one possible facet of the practices whereby actors order speech productions to accomplish and understand the active force of these utterances. This way of solving the “mapping problem” is closer to Wittgenstein’s idea of language games.

Moreover, in the conversation analytic view, importance is attached to how actors combine their utterances in a sequenced fashion. That is, the sequential organization of talk-in-interaction is a “primordial site of social action,” which implies that this organization needs

investigation and explication before the orderliness of conduct and action in institutional and other social structural arenas can be analyzed fully. This assertion implies a point of contact between conversation analysts and Goffman's concern with the interaction order. Among sociolinguists, discourse analysts, and cognitive sociologists, however, the argument is that participants' actions are not completely local in terms of either genesis or effect. It behooves the analyst to import the context or setting of talk ethnographically to analyze speech patterning and interactive order properly.

In short, the understanding of spoken language has moved from the conduit metaphor to an "action" orientation. Still, considerable controversy exists on how this orientation is best represented in theory and research. As this controversy continues, ever more realms of language use come under the social psychological microscope. To name just a few, these include discourse "marking" (Schiffrin, 1987; Sorjonen, 2001)—uses of "well ... and," "so," "y'know," and the like, idiomatic expressions (Drew & Holt, 1988; Kitzinger, 2000), gossip (Bergmann, 1993; Eder & enke, 1991; Goodwin, 1990), narrative (Labov, 1972a; Sacks, 1992b), puns and jokes (Sacks, 1992b), rhetoric (Atkinson, 1984; Billig, 1987), laughter (Glenn, 1995; Haakana, 2001; Jefferson, 1979; Lavin & Maynard, 2001), the intersection of grammar and interaction (Ochs et al., 1996) and numerous other aspects of the extraordinary human wealth represented in ordinary language, action, and social interaction.

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