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Key Concepts and Methods in Ethnography, Language & Communication

Three-day course
at
Max Planck Institute for the Study
of Religious & Ethnic Diversity
Göttingen

1-3 March 2010

Syllabus

King's College London
Tilburg University
Institute of Education

Websites: <http://www.rdi-elc.org.uk>
<http://www.kcl.ac.uk/cpd/elc>
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1. Overview of the course

	Monday 1 March 2010 9.30-4.30	Tuesday 2 March 2010 9.30-4.30 (+ 5-7)	Wednesday 3 March 2010 9.30-4.00
	<i>Linguistic ethnography – what, why & how</i>	<i>Goffman & Genre</i>	<i>Trans-contextual analysis</i>
Morning	<p>9.30-11.00 Introductions & brief overview of the course</p> <p>Linguistic ethnography: What and why? – lecture and discussion (BR)</p> <p>11:00-11.30 Break</p> <p>11:30-13:00 An illustration of LE analyses of data - data analysis workshop (part 1) (BR & AL)</p>	<p>9:30 – 10:15 Goffman lecture (BR)</p> <p>10:15 – 10:45 Break</p> <p>10:45 - 12:30 Comparing research interviews & spontaneous interaction using Goffman (BR)</p>	<p>9:30-10:30 Key concepts for transcontextual analysis – a discussion of papers by Mehan & Briggs (see below) (AL)</p> <p>10:30-11:00 Break</p> <p>11:00-13:00 Bureaucratic interaction – data analysis workshop (JB)</p>
	13:00-14:00 Lunch	12:30 -13:30 Lunch	13:00-14:00 Lunch
Afternoon	<p>14:00 – 15:30 An illustration of LE analyses of data – data analysis workshop (part 2) (AL & JB)</p> <p>15:45 – 16:30 Discussion of the potential relevance of this kind of analysis to participants’ own research (AL, JB, BR)</p>	<p>13:30 – 14:30 Genre and cognate concepts – lecture (JB)</p> <p>14:30 – 16:30 Struggles over genres of classroom interaction – data analysis workshop and discussion (AL)</p>	<p>14:00-15:30 Discussion and conclusions – Issues arising during the course (JB, BR, AL)</p>
		17:00 – 19:00 Optional data session with a participants’ data	
Readings	<p><i>ESSENTIAL reading in advance:</i> Harris & Rampton 2010. Ethnicities without guarantees: An empirical approach. In M. Wetherell (ed) <i>Identity in the 21st Century</i>. Basingstoke: Macmillan 95-119</p>	<p><i>ESSENTIAL reading in advance:</i> Goffman, E. 1981. Footing. In <i>Forms of Talk</i>. Oxford: Blackwell. 124-159. Rampton, B. (2007) Some key concepts in Ervin’s Goffman’s exploration of the interaction order. MS.</p>	<p><i>ESSENTIAL reading in advance:</i> Briggs, C. 1998. Notes on a ‘confession’: On the construction of gender, sexuality, and violence in an infanticide case. <i>Pragmatics</i>. 7 (4): 519-46 Mehan, H. 1996. The construction of an LD student: A case study in the politics of representation. In M. Silverstein & G. Urban (eds) <i>Natural Histories of Discourse</i>. Chicago: Univ of Chicago Press 253-76</p>
	See also: 19-23 July 2010: ‘Key concepts & methods in ethnography, language & communication’ – 5 day course, London. www.kcl.ac.uk/cpd/elc		

2. Theoretical perspective

Why ethnography, language and communication?

Language and communication are central to social science research. They are a key part of the methods and data collected in a broad range of approaches - for example, participant-observation, surveys, interviews, textual analyses, and experimental interventions. How researchers engage with language and communication crucially shapes the rigour and validity of their work.

The perspectives and tools explored in this course will help researchers to avoid the perils of both under- and over-interpretation. Traditional social scientific methods – e.g. interviews and surveys – often take what subjects’ say at face value, skimming the surface of the communicative event, under-estimating the influence of the social and historical context. At the same time, there are other approaches – e.g. critical discourse analysis, cultural criticism – that tend to over-privilege sociological and ideological factors, eclipsing what the specific text or interaction means for the participants involved, and the way they have brought their own agency to bear upon it. At another point of the spectrum, there are micro-analytic approaches, like conversation analysis, which tend to sideline the broader context of communication, thereby omitting significant sources of meaning and insight.

Selecting research methods inevitably involves trade-offs, and the ELC programme is designed to offer researchers from a variety of approaches and disciplines an appreciation of the complexities of language and communication, and a set of ethnographically sensitive tools to complement their current perspectives and methods of inquiry.

How do we approach language and communication?

Meaning involves much more just than the content of the words that are used – interviews, for example, entail more than the reporting of facts and opinions, and much more goes on in communication in classrooms and consultations than the official business of ‘learning’ or ‘diagnosis’. There is a continuous flow of signals about social stances and relationships carried in the small details of language and interaction – e.g. in a momentarily delayed reply, in the emphasis given to one word rather than another. At the same time, the production and interpretation of these signs is profoundly influenced by the participants’ expectations, assumptions and communicative resources, and increasingly often in contemporary conditions of globalisation, these take shape in social networks and prior experiences that are very different from the researcher’s.

In making sense of language and communication, we draw upon a range of disciplinary and methodological traditions, including:

- Ethnography of communication
- Interactional sociolinguistics
- New literacy studies
- Ethnomethodology and conversation analysis
- Linguistic anthropology
- Critical discourse analysis
- Multimodal social semiotics

UK researchers are now linking these in ‘linguistic ethnography’, which holds that

- that the contexts for communication should be investigated, not just assumed. Meaning takes shape among agents with different repertoires and expectations, in

specific social relations, interactional histories and institutional regimes, and these need to be grasped ethnographically. At the same time,

- biography, identifications, stance and nuance are extensively signalled in the textual fine-grain, so analysis of the internal organisation of verbal data reveals much of their position and significance in the world.

Focused in this way, linguistic ethnography aims for analyses that are both disciplined and rich.

The Key Methods and Concepts course

This three-day course is designed to introduce researchers to a range of perspectives and tools employed in the ethnographic study of language and communication. The course is divided into four sessions. The first day “Linguistic ethnography: What, why & how?” introduces participants to the key ideas and theoretical frameworks upon which the course is based, and to some of the major advantages and problems involved in the adoption of a “linguistic ethnographic” perspective. The remaining days are devoted to investigation of concepts and methods relevant to three different levels of analysis: micro-interactional, generic, and trans-contextual. Sessions include data analysis workshops, interactive lectures and discussions.

A 5-day version of the course will take place in London from 19th to 23rd July 2010 – see www.kcl.ac.uk/cpd/elc.

2. Tutors

Ben Rampton is Professor of Applied & Sociolinguistics at King’s College London, and Director of the Centre for Language, Discourse & Communication (www.kcl.ac.uk/lcd).

Jan Blommaert is Professor of Linguistic Anthropology at Tilburg University, Netherlands, and Director of the Babylon Centre for Studies on the Multicultural Society (www.tilburguniversity.nl/babylon).

Adam Lefstein is Senior Lecturer in Education at the Department of Learning, Curriculum and Communication, Institute of Education.

3. Course contents

DAY 1: Linguistic ethnography: What, why & how?

Date: Monday 1 March 2010 9.30-4.30

Data foci: Job interview, asylum interview,

Aims/questions:

- To provide an overview of the key theoretical frameworks and analytic methods that will be studied throughout the course.
- To situate the approaches to the study of ethnography, language and communication used in this course in relation to other research traditions and disciplines.
- To discuss the prospects and problems for integrating these approaches in participants' own work.

Programme:

9.30-11.00 Introductions & brief overview of the course
Linguistic ethnography: What and why? – lecture and discussion (BR)
11:00-11.30 Break
11:30-13:00 An illustration of LE analyses of data - data analysis workshop (part 1) (BR & AL)
13:00-14:00 Lunch
14:00 – 15:30 An illustration of LE analyses of data – data analysis workshop (part 2) (AL & JB)
15:45 – 16:30 Discussion of the potential relevance of this kind of analysis to participants' own research (AL, JB, BR)

Essential pre-reading:

Harris & Rampton 2010. Ethnicities without guarantees: An empirical approach. In M. Wetherell (ed) *Identity in the 21st Century*. Basingstoke: Macmillan 95-119

Follow-up reading:

Blommaert, J. 2010. Historical bodies & historical space. MS

Rampton, B. 2007. Neo-Hymesian linguistic ethnography in the UK. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*. 11/5: 584-608

Further readings:

Blommaert, J. 2005. *Discourse: A Critical Introduction*. Cambridge: CUP.

Cameron, D. 2001. *Working with Spoken Discourse*. London: Sage.

Duranti, A. 1997 *Linguistic Anthropology*. Cambridge: CUP.

Rampton, B. 2001. Critique in interaction. *Critique of Anthropology* 21 (1):83-107.

Scollon R. & Scollon W. 2003. *Discourses in Place*. London: Routledge.

Slembrouck, S. *What is Meant by 'Discourse Analysis'?* <http://bank.rug.ac.be/da/da.htm>
Wetherell M., S. Taylor & S. Yates (eds) 2001 *Discourse as Data*. London: Sage.

DAY 2: Goffman & genre

Dates: Tuesday 2 March

Data foci: Interviews and classroom interaction

Aims/questions:

- To introduce participants to Goffman's apparatus for micro-analysis of the 'interaction order'
- To consider "genre" as a key concept and analytic tool.
- To consider both the specificity & diversity of interview genres (methods of data collection).
- To undertake some 'linguistic ethnographic' data analysis (optional)

Programme:

9:30 – 10:15 Goffman lecture (BR)
10:15 – 10:45 Break
10:45 - 12:30 Comparing research interviews & spontaneous interaction using Goffman (BR)
12:30 -13:30 Lunch
13:30 – 14:30 Genre and cognate concepts – lecture (JB)
14:30 – 16:30 Struggles over genres of classroom interaction – data analysis workshop and discussion (AL)
17:00 – 19:00 Optional data session with a participants' data

Essential pre-readings:

Goffman, E. 1981. Footing. In *Forms of Talk*. Oxford: Blackwell. 124-159.
Rampton, B. (2007) Some key concepts in Ervin's Goffman's exploration of the interaction order. MS.

Follow-up reading:

Blum-Kulka, S. 2005. Rethinking genre Discursive events as a social interactional phenomenon. In K. Fitch & R. Sanders (eds) *Handbook of Language & Social Interaction*. NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum 275-30
Lefstein, Adam & Snell, Julia, "Playing X-factor in a Literacy Lesson: Social, Discursive and Pedagogical Implications of Mixing Discourse Genres"

Further reading:

- Briggs, C. & R. Bauman 1992. Genre, intertextuality and social power. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 2/2: 131-72
- Hanks, W.F. (1987) Discourse Genres in a Theory of Practice, *American Ethnologist*, 14(4): 668-692
- Hanks, W. 2006. Context, communicative. In K. Brown (ed) *Encyclopedia of Language & Linguistics*. 2nd Edition. Elsevier
- Rampton, B. 2006. Talk in class at Central High. Ch. 2 in *Language in Late Modernity*. Cambridge: CUP. 41-93

DAY 3: Trans-contextual analysis

Date: Wednesday 3 March 2010

Data foci: Bureaucratic interaction

Aims/questions:

- To look at the possibilities and problems involved in conducting ethnography beyond the event, i.e. multi-sited ethnography, employing historical perspective, looking beyond the immediate contexts of here and now.
- To explore ways of analyzing texts in historical and social contexts.

Programme:

9:30-10:30 Key concepts for transcontextual analysis – a discussion of Briggs' "Notes on a Confession" (AL)
10:30-11:00 Break
11:00-13:00 Bureaucratic interaction – data analysis workshop (JB)
13:00-14:00 Lunch
14:00-15:30 Discussion and conclusions – Issues arising during the course (JB, BR, AL)

Essential pre-readings:

- Briggs, C. 1998. Notes on a 'confession': On the construction of gender, sexuality, and violence in an infanticide case. *Pragmatics*. 7 (4): 519-46
- Mehan, H. 1996. The construction of an LD student: A case study in the politics of representation. In M. Silverstein & G. Urban (eds) *Natural Histories of Discourse*. Chicago: Univ of Chicago Press 253-76

Follow-up reading:

- Blommaert, J. 2009. Language, asylum & the national order. *Current Anthropology*. 50/4