

The Structure of Meaning in Talk: Explorations in Category Analysis. Volume I: Co-categorization, Contrast, and Hierarchy.

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“The properties of indexical expressions are ordered properties, and...that they are ordered is an ongoing, practical accomplishment of every actual occasion of commonplace speech and conduct” Garfinkel and Sacks (1970:341).

Introduction

Rather than publish this monograph, I have decided to make it generally available via the internet. Of course, anyone can put anything on the internet, so there is no guarantee of quality. Such an internet document does not have the dignity of a peer-reviewed book. It won't get one promoted or significantly upgrade one's vita. It won't make one any money (insert joke here). There are, nevertheless, significant advantages to this form of distribution. It is easily available and free. I can do things (like including an article-length appendix) that would likely be unacceptable to a commercial publisher. I can get it out quickly and can produce new “editions” as the research develops. And I can link the text to sound and video recordings.¹

This monograph represents most of the work that I have so far done in an area that I call "occasioned semantics," which is an attempt to analyze meaning structures in recorded, transcribed talk in a systematic, semi-formal way. As presently conceived, occasioned semantics deals with co-categorization and contrast, hierarchy (inclusiveness and subsumption), and scaling in actual talk. My work on hierarchy, co-categorization, and contrast, as represented in taxonomic form, is rather more advanced than my work on scaling, so this volume is devoted to taxonomic relations. I am planning eventually to produce a second volume, devoted to scaling. The novelty of what I am attempting to do here lies not so much in the formal concepts that I use—semantic hierarchy, co-categorization and contrast—or the taxonomic form of representation, as in the use of that

¹ I do not have recordings for some of the transcripts that are drawn from others' work. Also, although I have recordings for the data identified as NJC and FTC, I was unable to reach all the participants to secure their permission, so I have not posted those recordings.

representational form to aid in the analysis of carefully transcribed samples of actual interactive talk. I attend to what is occurring on particular occasions, with constant attention to the here-and-now, indexical properties of the talk. So, the taxonomies (and, eventually, scales) that I deal with are occasioned taxonomies (and occasioned scales). My primary object of investigation is not language or culture or cognitive structure or the logical properties of the formal structures that I employ—it is the event at hand, specifically, the talk. I draw primarily from five analytical approaches: sequential conversation analysis (hereafter SA), ethnomethodological analysis of category usage, Sacksian analysis of category usage, including but not limited to membership categorization analysis (MCA), linguistic pragmatics (particularly conversational implicature), and ethnographic and linguistic semantics.

I will need to discuss ethnographic/linguistic semantics and Sacks' approach to categorization in some detail in subsequent chapters. The discussion of conversational implicature will be held for inclusion in Volume II. I will say something in this introduction about how ethnomethodology and sequential analysis informed my understanding of meaning and formulation.

Ethnomethodological studies of categories (Garfinkel 1967, Cicourel 1968) focused on social use. (I am making a distinction between the ethnomethodological research tradition initiated by Harold Garfinkel and the Sacksian conversation analytic tradition, although some view CA as a branch of ethnomethodology [see, e.g., Maynard and Clayman 1991], and some strains of CA were unarguably ethnomethodological. In fact, Garfinkel and Sacks co-authored a major, much cited paper [Garfinkel and Sacks 1970]. Garfinkel told me that he considered Sacks' work to be a form of ethnomethodology until it turned in a somewhat different direction, with the publication of the seminal turn-taking paper, co-authored with Emanuel Schegloff and Gail Jefferson, in 1974.) For the ethnomethodologists, one major point of interest is in how unique events, persons, etc. are subjected to categorization, so as to make them consistent with a pre-established social order. For example, it was pointed out that Durkheim's classic findings regarding suicide were based on the official classification of some deaths as

suicides, others not. Thus, the procedure used in such classification, “the fact of the fact,” was of capital importance. Durkheim’s findings were built on “facts” of uncertain provenance (Douglas 1971). Cicourel (1968) studied how criminal statistics were generated through the interpretive procedures of officials in the criminal justice system. Wieder (1974) describes how behavior in a halfway house was categorized in accordance with a prisoners’ code and how, through that categorization, the behaviors were made visible as recognizable forms of social action.

Categories are not only administered after the fact. Ethnomethodologists are also sensitive to the work that goes into making an entity categorizable in a particular way. The foundational work in this connection is Garfinkel’s (1967) study of Agnes, a transsexual. Garfinkel described in detail Agnes’ methods for presenting herself as a recognizable female. There is some tension between these two approaches to categories. Is social order produced by categorizing and otherwise accounting for inchoate behavior, or is behavior constructed in fine detail so as to be categorizable and otherwise accountable? In either case, categories are a product of members’ methods for producing and recognizing phenomena. We are directed to look at the “work” that goes into this production and recognition.

Another essential grounding for the work presented in this book is sequential conversation analysis (as opposed to categorical analysis, Sacks’ other major interest). Conversation analysis (CA) is the study of the organization of talk-in-interaction. We run here into a terminological problem: does CA include Sacksian category analysis or only the study of the sequential organization of talk-in-interaction? When I want to be specific, I will refer to sequential analysis (SA) and category analysis (CtA). I use CA more generally to include both, not only because SA and CtA are both associated with Sacks but also because they share features in common. As with ethnomethodology, the CA focus is on members’ methods in the production of social order. CA is characterized by a set of methodological techniques and perspectives: primarily, recording of “natural” data, participant orientation, attention to detail (“order at all points,” as Sacks

put it), sequentiality, next turn proof procedure, and deviant case analysis.² Of particular importance for my purposes is the CA approach to meaning in interaction. Meaning is at the very heart of sequential analysis. Perhaps the most central technique of SA is the discovery of how utterances are understood in interaction through an examination of the responses they elicit (Moerman and Sacks 1988, Schegloff 1992). The response to a prior utterance demonstrates the interlocutor's understanding of that prior utterance, and that proposed understanding is, in its turn, subject to acceptance or contradiction by the original speaker. This approach leads naturally to the realization that meaning is sequentially negotiated. Here is a classic example, from a radio call-in show. B is the caller, A the host.

Schegloff (1984:28) Click on image to play recording (courtesy of E.A. Schegloff)

- 1 B: He says, governments, an' you know he keeps- he feels about governments, they
- 2 sh- the thing they sh'd do is what's right or wrong.
- 3 A: For whom
- 4 B: Well he says- [he-
- 5 A: [By what standard
- 6 B: That's what- that's exactly what I mean.



B's initial understanding of A's utterance at line 3 is as a question directed to B. This understanding is implicit in B's response. His answer, though, is interrupted by A, with another interrogative construction. At this point, B achieves a reinterpretation of A's utterances. The meanings of gesture can be negotiated in the same manner. I offer an example, too lengthy to present in this introduction, in Appendix 1. For conversation analysts, the meaning of an utterance or gesture is something for the participants to the conversation to work out. The meaning is whatever the participants can agree it is.

² For illumination on these matters, the uninitiated reader is referred to the wide array of introductory essays and books, from Levinson (1983, chapter 6) and Heritage (1984, chapter 8) to Schegloff (2007a), Kasper (2011), and Sidnell and Stivers (2013).

The chief virtue of CA is that it offers a methodological alternative to both anecdote and quantification, a disciplined, systematic way of observing and analyzing social action.³ The concepts of evidence and proof have a particular interpretation within CA. Popper (1959) suggested the falsification criterion for scientific laws. A scientific “law” is true until further notice. At any moment, an event may occur which stands in contradiction to the “law,” at which point it is no longer a law. There is no way to prove a scientific law to be true. All we can do is to repeatedly test it and fail to disconfirm it. The CA handling of evidence is more or less the obverse of Popper’s. Each intelligibly occurring item is, in a real sense, its own proof. It proves that this is one way that a certain meaning or a certain conversational sequence can be achieved; this is a possible member’s practice. For example, Sacks (1992:256--257) observes that children commonly clear space for themselves in conversation by beginning with “You know what?”, thus occasioning a question (“What”) which calls for an answer. But even if this were not a common practice, even if Sacks had only found one case, the analysis would stand. CA claims are claims about the resources available to interactants in constructing meaning and enabling or constraining conversational organization and conversational outcomes. CA makes statements such as, “This is a way to perform action X or achieve meaning Y or affect the trajectory of the conversation.” CA is about How, about method. How is a certain meaning produced? How is an utterance interpreted? How is conversational organization achieved and manipulated? Of course, it is possible to misconstrue or fail to see the significance of an occurrence, but falsification occurs in CA only through reinterpretation, not hypothesis testing. One cannot disprove a CA phenomenon by finding instances in which the phenomenon does not occur.

CA’s innovations in respect to meaning, order, and method has resulted in new approaches to such fundamental matters as context (Schegloff 1991), description (Schegloff 1988), rules and analytical categories (Bilmes 1988), and social structure (Drew and Heritage 1992). The ethnomethodological/CA mentality, including avoidance

³ My understanding of CA and its merits is most fully expressed in Bilmes (2014; see also Bilmes 1988).

of theoretical predispositions and preoccupations and of psychologistic explanation, is crucial to my approach to analysis in this book. Sequential analysis is very much a part of this approach, since the meaning structures that I try to reveal are sequentially developed. The attention to sequence in category analysis has been explicitly argued for by Watson (1997, 2015)) and others, but is clearly implicit in Sacks' work. This is one way that the CA approach to categories is distinguished from philosophical, linguistic, and cognitive approaches. But my objectives are somewhat different from those which dominate SA. My use of sequential analysis is not so much a product of abstract considerations as of the contingencies of the actual analyses that I have done. I did not set out with a determination to do a sequential analysis—it was simply what the data required. Since (in the present work) I am merely using SA when appropriate, not attempting to contribute to its concepts or methods, and since those concepts and methods have been repeatedly and well described elsewhere, I present only this brief introduction.

My endeavor in this book is to achieve some systematic understanding of how structures of meaning are developed in talk, a task initially addressed by Harvey Sacks' studies of categorization as a localized social practice. I call what I am doing "occasioned semantics." Deppermann (2011a) refers to the enterprise as "interactional semantics." I prefer my formulation because, although I have thusfar worked exclusively with interactional materials, the methods that I use can be applied as well to monologs and even written materials. Of course, strict monolog and writing (except, to some extent, for interactive writing, as in the exchange of written messages) do not offer the kind of analytical purchase provided by interactive materials.⁴ Furthermore, written language is not tied to specific occasions in the way that spoken language is, but it is,

⁴ With talk-in-interaction, we are offered the possibility of discovering how the talk was interpreted by participants. With monolog, we are deprived of the "next turn proof procedure," but we can still observe self-correction, pausing, intonation, voice quality, etc., as well as audience reaction. With writing, we have only the sentences themselves, with perhaps some indication of paralinguistic features, such as stress. Furthermore, although writing is language-in-use, and so constructs, to some extent, its own meanings, it transcends particular situations, although not historical setting. It is therefore lacking in both the resources and constraints associated with particular occasions.

crucially, language-in-use, rather than what Saussure (1916) calls “langue,” the linguistic system abstracted from actual use. So, I am looking at meanings and meaning structures as they are, in part, developed in use. More specifically, I am looking at categories and other formulations (roughly, ways of saying things). Occasioned semantics, then, is the study of the semantics of language-in-use.

The next two chapters provide a conceptual underpinning for occasioned semantics (Chapter 1) and, more particularly, for occasioned taxonomy (Chapter 2). Chapters 3-7 present taxonomic analyses of conversational data. On these chapters, the whole enterprise stands or falls. Chapter 8 ties up some loose ends and offers some final thoughts. Significant portions of Chapters 1, 5, and 7 are lifted (with some modification) from previous publications (Bilmes 2011,⁵ 2009a,⁶ 2008⁷).

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Chapter 1: Formulation and Occasioned Semantics

Formulation

I will call a linguistic expression (or gesture) with some conventional meaning a “signifying expression.”⁸ Each signifying expression, when actually used, is a formulation. It is these signifying-expressions-in-use, and their relations, that constitute the subject matter of occasioned semantics. Signifying expressions are also units of larger, complex formulations—descriptions, for example, or even whole narratives. Note that I am not talking about formulation in the sense proposed originally by Garfinkel and Sacks (1970) and adopted by various other conversation analysts (e.g., Antaki 2008; Arminen 2005; Barnes 2007; Drew 2003; Gafaranga and Britten 2004; Heritage and Watson 1979; Walker 1995); that is, as a statement of the gist, meaning, or upshot of previous conversation. In fact, Sacks himself, in his lectures, uses the term “formulation” frequently, and not in this sense. What Garfinkel and Sacks are talking about is more properly called “reformulation,” because the previous conversation already consists of formulations. So, then, what can be said about formulation? We can start by examining some examples of Sacks’ (1992) usage of the term.

“formulating one’s present state” (Vol. 1: 69);

“he formulates his remarks in terms of ‘you’” (Vol. 1: 166);

“there are alternative ways that he and those he is dealing with...may be categorically formulated” (Vol. 1: 205);

“formulating the session as a ‘group therapy session’” (Vol. 1: 515);

”assign name-formulations to the actions” (Vol. 1: 515).

In these passages, and many more, Sacks usage of the term is consistent with the dictionary definition—“to put into words” (wordnetweb.princeton.edu). To be sure,

⁸ It is to be noted that an expression may signify by virtue of its placement. So, “yes” or “he did” has a particular signification when preceded by “Did he do his homework?”

Sacks sometimes uses the term in somewhat divergent and idiosyncratic ways (“we could formulate the omnirelevance of patient-therapist” [V. 1: 515]), but, in general, he uses formulation in its common meaning. Now, “to put into words,” implies a “something” that is being put into words, an object, concept, attribute, situation, action, etc. That is, a formulation has a referent. I want to stress that I am using “referent” in a broad sense; whatever can be referred to, from an object to a concept to a state of affairs, is a referent. However, I will also want to include as formulations performatives with no reference, such as greetings. One formulates a greeting, in the sense of choosing among an array of alternatives (e.g., “hello,” as opposed to “hi” or “how do you do”). So now our definition is broadened from “putting something into words” to “the meaningful use of (particular) words (or gestures).” When we look at expressions as formulations we are looking at them as choices. The choice may be stylistic, as with “hi” versus “hello,” but it may also be a selection from among possible characterizations (“smart” or “handsome”), identities (“Catholic” or “student”), etc. So, a formulation is a choice among alternative ways of speaking, or more broadly, ways of using linguistic expressions, whether in speech or writing. We may say that a formulation is a signifying expression as used on a particular occasion, an expression viewed as chosen from a set of alternatives.

A formulation may do pure reference, as with a proper name.⁹ Or, it may have a descriptive, reality-constructive aspect. The notion of formulation bridges Schegloff’s (2007b) distinction between category and reference. I am not questioning the utility of this distinction, but, given that we may speak of someone as “John Smith” or “the guy with the hat” or “the mailman,” we will need a term that covers the possibility of these alternative ways of speaking.

In its minimal form, a formulation is a single meaningful item, such as a word. However, it may also be a much longer unit. A narrative, by my definition, may be

⁹ I am not really sure that there is such a thing as “pure reference.” Even the use of a proper name is a choice from among other referential possibilities and may therefore have descriptive implications or overtones.

considered a formulation insofar as it is a particular way of describing some event(s). A formulation is any linguistic/discursive unit—a word, phrase, sentence, narrative, etc.—that is, any coherent, recognizable verbal expression that is actually produced by a speaker/writer. Everything that we say or write consists of, or is, a formulation, unless it is gibberish. But, in order to obtain some analytical purchase on formulations, we must consider them as choices made from among a set of alternatives.

A formulation is always usable as an utterance but is somewhat different than an utterance. An utterance may contain several formulations. In addition, an utterance must actually be uttered.¹⁰ A formulation may occur as writing as well as speech. When a formulation is in fact uttered, we include as elements not only words but also features of performance, such as gesture,¹¹ stress, “tone of voice,” etc. (In fact, such elements may be included even in unuttered formulations, insofar as they are indicated. For example, a written formulation may include underlining to indicate stress.) The way an utterance is formulated is obviously (partially) determinative both of its meaning and its character as social action. This is not to deny that formulations occur in some context and derive part of their situated meaning from the context.

Looking further into this notion of formulation, here is another passage from Sacks:

Members can't do pure formulating. That is to say, you can't be engaged in 'merely'—non-consequentially, non-methodically, non-alternatively—saying 'This is, after all, a group therapy session'. To do that—even though you're merely invoking one thing that's true about this—is to do other things as well, e.g., put somebody down for something they said, propose special relevancies, propose that some topic ought to be discussed or not be discussed, invoke a

¹⁰ I have run across definitions of utterance that seem to include written language, but this, I think, does not represent the common understanding.

¹¹ Some gestures are significant, in the sense that they have referents and may substitute for words. They are, like signifying words, to be considered, in themselves, formulations. Thus, the notion of a formulation as “putting into words” is too narrow.

status hierarchy, etc. At any rate, in each case that a formulation of a setting, or an identity, is done, that's something that has some line of consequences, and some analyzable bases, for participants, which can be one differentiated from another possible formulation, and also from not doing it at all (1992, Vol. 1: 516).

Sacks is making two major points about formulations. One, of course, is that they are inevitably a way of doing, not merely saying, something, a notion familiar to us from speech act theory, although Sacks' notion of "doing" is broader. But he makes another crucial point with "non-alternatively" and "differentiated from another possible formulation," namely, that a formulation is a choice from among a number of alternative ways of identifying or describing the referent or producing the conversational action. So, a formulation is a consequential choice, what the discursive psychologists call "rhetoric" (Billig 1996; Edwards 1997; Potter 1996). Presumably, the particular choice made forwards some line of argument, defends some position, or otherwise serves the purposes of the speaker, but it is sufficient, and preferable, to simply say that it has consequences. It follows that a formulation is always local—it cannot be fully accounted for in cultural or semantic terms.

So, the concept of choice is central to the subject of formulation and occasioned semantics. When describing a person, we may say "He is tall" or "He is smart". Both may be true, but they are very different. That is, we are "putting into words" two different "somethings." But in saying "He is smart," we are also choosing to say that in preference to "He is clever" and "John is smart," which may express essentially the same concept, although with perhaps differing connotations. So, in describing him as smart, we are making, simultaneously, two types of choices. Sometimes these choices are made obvious in the talk, as when an item is recategorized. Sometimes it is implicit—it is up to the analyst to imagine the possible alternatives.

What, then, is a "possible alternative"? I would suggest that what makes an alternative "possible" within a particular conversation is similar reference, plausibility,

relevance, and non-contradiction. If two formulations do not refer to the same thing, or express the same type of action, they are not alternatives. The plausibility criterion provides that a formulation that is clearly false cannot be offered as an alternative to one that is possibly true, given the recipient's knowledge. So, for example, "I saw a short man" cannot (normally) be alternatively formulated by "I saw a man who was about three inches tall," because the first is possibly true, that is, plausible, and the second is transparently false. The third criterion is relevance. Consider a math teacher talking to John's parents at a teacher-parent conference. "John is tall, but he doesn't try" is not a relevant alternative to "John is clever, but he doesn't try". Perhaps we could say that the relevance criterion is simply a way of claiming that the context constrains the possible referent—so, in this case, the referent is not John in toto but John's intellectual ability. (On the other hand, if the task is just to describe John, "John is tall" is an alternative to "John is clever.") In any event, a fact, such as John is tall, may be free-floating truth in theory, but in practice it is bound to a context. The final criterion is non-contradiction: "John is short" and "John is tall" are not alternative formulations. They both refer to John's height, they may both be plausible and relevant, but they are contradictory—they cannot both be true.

For performatives, a possible alternative is another way of performing the same sort of action. Of course, "same sort of action" is not so easy to define. Take the case of "Hi" versus "Hello." When we choose "Hi," we are, in some sense, doing something different than we would be doing if we said "Hello." But it is clear that (normally) we are performing the same sort of action, namely, doing a greeting. The problem arises when we consider, say, "hi" versus "I promise." They are both cases of "speaking English," and, furthermore, of performative utterances, but we surely would not want to say that they are alternative formulations. We will need to figure out what we mean by claiming that two utterances perform the same sort of action. Perhaps it will be sufficient to say that two performative utterances are alternatives when they can be said to perform the same action at some lower taxonomic level than "speaking [a particular language]."

Pure performatives aside, formulations are not, in the first instance, ways of doing things (e.g., eliciting offers), although they may serve such purposes. Saying is doing, to be sure, but saying is also saying. So, for instance, asserting something to be true, an illocutionary act, requires the communication of that which is being asserted. I would argue that even performatives, such as “hello,” say before they do. That is, in order to accomplish the action that they are designed to perform, they must first be recognizable as linguistic items.¹² We know that “hello” is (among other things) a greeting even when, as here, it is not being used as such.

This may seem a regression to a pre-Austinian, pre-Wittgensteinian mentality, but I will retain the conversation analytic focus on recordings and transcripts of actual occasions of talk, on indexical meaning, and on participant interpretations, and I will retain a sensitivity to interaction as an analytical resource. And I am not losing sight of the fact that formulations do something; I am merely insisting that they also say something. In addition, as with CA in general, I will avoid theoretical preoccupations and mentalistic explanations. I will look for what the data has to offer. This requires an analysis of how meaning is structured in the particular talk under analysis, for the choices are made from within that structural framework. Also, this inevitably involves a consideration of culture and particularly of linguistic resources and of possible but non-occurring alternatives. Thus, such an analysis, while taking the actual talk as its object, must, to some extent, depart from the data at hand.

¹² I am indebted to Arnulf Deppermann for reminding me that this is not necessarily true in the case of language acquisition, where recognition of the action performed by the utterance is a condition of understanding the meaning of the utterance. However, once, say, “Hello” is understood as a way of greeting, it has that as its meaning, a meaning, for instance, that I can refer to here, although I am not using the word to perform a greeting.

Of course, the relation between saying and doing is reflexive—to know what an utterance does, one needs to know what it says, but the understanding of what it says is, to some extent, shaped by what it is taken to be doing. My point is simply this: our understanding of what utterances do is based (usually) on our prior knowledge of language. “This is a group therapy session” may, as Sacks asserts, invoke status hierarchy, or whatever, but these interpretations are based on an initial understanding of “what the words mean.” This applies to the notion of indexical interpretation in general. I will have more to say on this subject in Chapter 8.

Occasioned Semantics

Conversation consists of a fabric of understandings (and sometimes misunderstandings), locally invoked and, to at least a large extent, locally and sequentially generated, but, once generated, having enduring presence within the conversation. The fabric consists of linguistic (semantic/grammatical) “competence,” presuppositions, implicit and explicit agreements and disagreements, “common knowledge” and shared experience, implications and implicatures, etc. But the meanings and understandings generated in conversation are structured and it is the various aspects of this structure that are my subject. The study of these structures of meaning is what I refer to as occasioned semantics.¹³ I am suggesting that it is not just the meanings of expressions but whole structures of meaning that are created by members as ongoing situated accomplishments.

Occasioned semantics deals with a subset of formulation. It deals with words or phrases (or signifying gestures), what I will call “expressions,” as opposed to longer units, such as sentences, narratives, or accounts. The concern is with fields or structures of meaning. In conversational interaction, fields of meaning are not generated by a single mind or speaker. They are not the sole product of culture, biography, or knowledge. They are, in current parlance, co-constructed in the situation. They are on-the-spot creations and cannot be encompassed by any theory or any finite cultural compendium. They are emergent, “contingent...accomplishments of organized artful practices” (Garfinkel, 1967:11). On the other hand, speech events, whether multiparty or monological, take place within the constraints, and using the resources, of culture, especially language. The meaning of any verbal expression is always indexical, but it is never entirely indexical (Bilmes, 1986: 124-126, 156-160).

My approach has been to attempt a systematic, technical approach to meaning structures in talk by examining various properties or operations or dimensions associated

¹³Occasioned semantics should not be confused with Charles Fillmore’s frame semantics (1976). In frame semantics, the meaning of a linguistic item is understood in relation to a general knowledge about the world, rather than to a structure generated in a particular conversational or textual setting.

with signifying expressions. I focus on what I take to be the three fundamental dimensions of meaning structure, comprising the basic “architecture of meaning” in talk.

1. Co-categorization and contrast. I place these together because they are opposite sides of the same coin. Co-categorization emphasizes the similarity of two or more formulations. Contrast also implies that the items belong to the same overarching category, but emphasizes their differences. So, to take an example from a subsequent chapter, “street girl” and “house girl” are co-categorized as prostitutes, but, as the speaker tells us, “there is a difference between a house girl and a street girl.”

2. Inclusion¹⁴ and subsumption, which I refer to as hierarchy. Frequently, a formulation in conversation is later reformulated at a more general or specific level. Even when this is not so, many formulations may be said to be given at some particular level of generality. Thus, when we say “tree,” we have said something more general than “pine” and more specific than “plant”. The choice of any particular level of inclusion is a rhetorical choice, with certain consequences (see Deppermann 2011b; Hauser 2011).

3. Scaling. Although I have not included any chapters on scaling in the present volume—scaling will be the subject of Volume 2—I will discuss it briefly here as part of the description of occasioned semantics. Scaling involves the arrangement of a set of items from less to more extreme or intense. In other words, it deals with any relation where “more” and “less” might apply. I am particularly interested in “implicative scales” in actual talk. Two general characteristics of implicative scales are that at least some of the items are not mutually exclusive and that the use of a less extreme item implicates the absence of the more extreme items. So, for example, offering a weak excuse implicates, but does not logically imply, that one does not have a stronger excuse available (see Bilmes 1993, 1995a, on response priority). CA already incorporates ideas

¹⁴ In most, maybe all cases, inclusion/subsumption has the same signification as general/specific. Although it may seem odd to say that “arm” is more general than “wrist,” “I hurt my wrist” is clearly more specific than “I hurt my arm.”

of lexical upgrading and downgrading,¹⁵ but these notions have been used in an ad hoc manner and have not, to my knowledge, been topicalized or given technical specification.¹⁶ My approach is clearly related to Gricean analysis and to so-called Horn scales (Grice 1975; Horn 1972) but there are a number of differences, including attention to actual data, on-the-spot creation of scales, interaction of scales in talk, and sensitivity to cultural, indexical, and sequential—not just logical or semantic, in-the-language—factors. Moreover, my interests in scaling go beyond implicature to all the ways in which scale relations play a part in conversational interaction. I include as scaling phenomena such matters as politeness and “conventional marking” (i.e., use of non-standard expressions to convey meaning, such as, a mother using “your son” rather than “Bobby” when speaking to the boy’s father). I plan, as I have already said, to take this up in the second volume of this monograph.

I consider co-categorization/contrast, hierarchy, and scaling to constitute the basic relations of meaning structure in conversation. There are, to be sure, other meaning-productive phenomena, such as highlighting (Goodwin 1994), scripting (Edwards 1994, 1995), and epistemic claims (Heritage 2012a, 2012b, 2013, Heritage and Raymond 2005, Raymond and Heritage 2006)). But I consider these to be techniques or tactics, themselves composed of meanings and meaning-relationships. Nevertheless, the sequential specification and negotiation of the meaning of particular expressions is an essential complement to occasioned semantics, and perhaps a more complete integration of the two approaches is possible.

¹⁵ Up- and downgrading involve at least two occurrences of an expression, an original occurrence and an up- or downgrade. The notion of scale is more general in the sense that it may encompass an expression’s position on a (relevant) scale even if that expression is not up- or downgraded in the talk.

¹⁶ Up- and downgrading have been topicalized in relation to prosody and phonetic features. See Couper-Kuhlen (2014), Plug (2014). There is also a small literature on “extreme case formulations (Edwards 2000; Inigo-Mora 2007; Norrick 2004; Pomerantz 1986; Robles 2015; Sidnell 2004).

Occasioned semantics deals with expressions in relation to other expressions used in the conversation and in relation to other expressions that might possibly have been used. The result is an analysis that is systematic and technical (although not, as we shall see, mechanical) rather than ad hoc and intuitive. I view occasioned semantics as a step toward a more inclusive methodology of formulation analysis, midway, as it were, between Sacks' membership categorization analysis and the analysis of broader units such as accounts and narratives. As will be evident in subsequent chapters, the practice of occasioned semantic analysis draws on conversation analytic techniques for revealing sequential specification and negotiation of meaning. What I am suggesting here is emphatically not to be understood as an alternative to sequential analysis, but rather as complementary.

Chapter 2: Taxonomic Structure—Inclusion, Co-categorization, and Contrast

Category analysis

I have argued (Bilmes 2011) that membership categorization analysis (MCA), as initiated by Harvey Sacks and pursued by his followers, is an unnecessarily narrow approach. To begin with, Sacks himself dealt with various forms of categories other than person categories. But it was MCA that was primarily developed with what he called a "machinery" and that was offered as a named system of analysis. I am suggesting that we expand our focus to categorization analysis in general. Unfortunately, the acronym for category analysis is CA, which is already taken by the field of conversation analysis. May I suggest, then, CtA? CtA is a major part of the larger undertaking of the analysis of formulations in talk.

The analysis of categories in thought, culture, and social relations has been a major concern in many academic disciplines. Here are some outstanding examples: In anthropology, componential and taxonomic analysis (Tyler 1969) and symbolic approaches (Douglas 1966); in philosophy, Schutz (1967), who used the term "typification,"; in psychology, Bruner, Goodnow, and Austin (1956), Rosch (1978); in linguistics, Lakoff (1987); in ethnomethodology, Garfinkel (1967), Cicourel (1968); in conversation analysis (more specifically, the Sacksian tradition of category analysis), Jayyusi (1984) Sacks (1992), Schegloff (1972). Although conversation analytic work on categories came to be overshadowed by an emphasis on sequential analysis, recently there has been a renewed concern with categories and reference, and particularly categorization of and reference to persons. (On reference, within a sequentialist framework: Enfield and Stiver 2007; Lerner and Kitzinger 2007; Sacks and Schegloff 1979; Schegloff 2007b. On categorization, especially MCA, Hester and Eglin 1997; Fitzgerald and Housley 2015; Schegloff 2007c; Stokoe 2012; among many others.)

The anthropological/linguistic approach

In four papers (Bilmes 2011, 2009a, b, 2008), I proposed an addition to Sacks' analytic apparatus; namely, the presence of taxonomies--call them occasioned taxonomies—in actual talk. The study of folk taxonomies flourished in anthropology in the 1960s and 70s. The main type of structures examined were what are commonly called "inclusion taxonomies." For a reason that I will explain shortly, I use the term "classonomy" (short for "class taxonomy") instead. These taxonomies represented "kind of" relations between levels and contrast within levels. As formulated by Fraake (1969 [1962]),

1. "A terminologically distinguished array of objects is a segregate" (31). [A segregate, apparently, is equivalent to a category.]
2. "A series of terminologically contrasted segregates forms a contrast set" (33).
3. "Segregates in different contrast sets, then, may be related by inclusion. A system of contrast sets so related is a taxonomy" (34). Or, in my terms, a classonomy, a particular sort of taxonomy. (For a more formal and detailed exposition, see Kay 1971.)

For example:

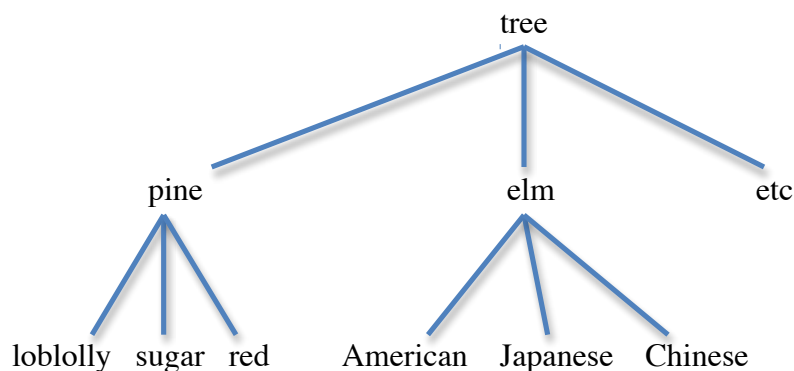


Figure 2. 1

This classonomy tells us, among other things, that a loblolly is a kind of pine, which is, in turn, a kind of tree (and thus a loblolly is also a kind of tree). If it is true to say "That is a loblolly," it is also true to say "That is a pine" and "That is a tree." On the

other hand, it does not follow that, if a thing is a tree, it is a pine, or that, if it is a pine, it is a loblolly. And, it is not the case that whatever can be said of, say, pines, can be said of trees. “All pines have needles” is true; “All trees have needles” is not. The classonmy, as presented, has three "levels of contrast" (or two, if we do not count the unique beginner, “tree”). That is, items belonging to the same category are mutually exclusive (as, of course, are items belonging to different categories). If a pine is a loblolly, then it is not a sugar pine or a red pine. Nor, of course, is it an elm of any sort. Furthermore, classonomies lead "down," ultimately, to unique individuals. That is, for a tree classonmy, the lowest level is composed of categories whose members are individual trees. The labeled nodes in a classonmy (the taxa) are sets (i.e., categories). Terms at a relatively higher classonomic level are hypernyms; the terms comprised by the higher level term are its hyponyms. So, pine is a hyponym of tree, which is a hypernym of pine.

There are some classonomies which are not comfortably defined by the “kind of” relation. To use a couple of examples offered by Lyons (1977), it sounds awkward to say that buying is a kind of getting or that being friendly is a kind of being nice. (“Way of” works better for these terms.) Nevertheless, “buy” is clearly a hyponym of “get” and “friendly” of “nice.” This can be seen by considering a construction such as, “Did he buy it or get it in some other way?” or “When you say he is nice, do you mean that he is friendly, or is he nice in some other way?”

Another sort of complication is presented by Cruse (2011). He uses the example of clothing. “Trousers,” “jacket,” “dress,” etc. are kinds of clothing. But how does one deal with a lower level term, such as “lingerie”? Lingerie is a type of clothing worn only by women. It includes underwear, but also nighties and pajamas. There is no correlative term for males. How is one to construct a neat classonmy out of such elements?

The mutual exclusivity criterion is, in some respects, useful. For example, cowboy and bachelor are both potential hyponyms of man, but they would not be permitted in the same classonmy, because the same person could be both. This seems right, since cowboy is an occupation and bachelor is a marital status.

But there are also problems posed by the mutual exclusivity criterion. It would seem that a classonmy of religion would have to include, on the same taxonomic level both Buddhism (or Christianity or Islam) and animism. Yet, individuals may be, and frequently are, both Buddhist (or Christian or Muslim) and animist. Buddhism and animism are indeed different, and, of course, if the question is “Are you an animist?” and the answer is “No, I’m a Buddhist,” the categories have been made mutually-exclusive-for-present-purposes. But, outside the question-answer sequence, the statement “I’m a Buddhist” does not necessarily imply that I am not an animist. To take another example, one would want to include both son and brother in a classonmy of family members, yet the same individual may be both son and brother.

As we shall see, linguistic complications such as these are rendered irrelevant under a language-in-use approach and my more relaxed definition of taxonomy.

A classonmy is one type of taxonomy. Another type, called a "partonomy," (or, sometimes, “meronomy”) represents "part of" relations (see Brown 1976).

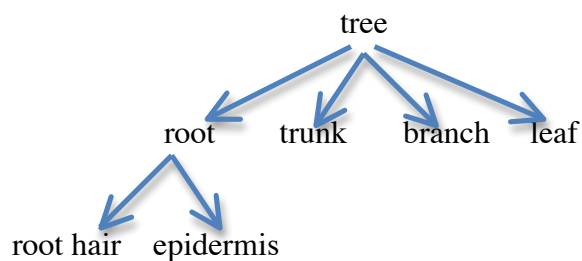


Figure 2.2
(arrowed lines indicate “part of” relation)

The logic of partonomies is quite different from the logic of classonomies. Whereas a superordinate term in a partonomy implies its parts (so tree implies root, etc.) a hypernym in a class taxonomy does not (tree does not imply pine). On the other hand, although pine implies tree, root does not imply tree, since other plants have roots as well. As a linguistic matter, tree is not more inclusive or general than root, but root, in a tree

partonomy, is to be understood as tree root.¹⁷ Trees include (tree) roots, even if not all roots are included in trees.

Unlike class taxonomies, partonomies do not necessarily deal with categories. Times Square and Columbus Circle are parts of Manhattan, yet none of these terms are categories. And, a tree partonomy does not lead down to individual trees, but only to smallest terminologically distinguished parts (or to the items which are the material manifestations of those terms).

As with classonomies, there are complications and perplexities associated with partonomies in theoretical semantics (see Cruse 2011: sections 6.2.2-6.2.2.4). As with classonomies, items at the same level in a partonomy are normally mutually exclusive. If an arm part is a wrist, it is not an elbow; if a tree part is a root, it is not a branch. But if we make mutual exclusivity a criterion, we find problems similar to those we found with classonomies. A family partonomy would need to include brother and son, but, as with the family member classonomy, the same individual may be both brother and son.¹⁸

Once again, though, in a Sacksian, use-focused approach, these complications are not problematic. If, to put it crudely, the participants agree that “these are the parts of X,” then, for analytic purposes, those are the parts.

It should be noted that there are important similarities between classonomies and partonomies. In both cases, we find increasing inclusiveness as we look to higher levels of the diagram. (This is why I favor “classonomy” [=class taxonomy] over “inclusion taxonomy” when referring exclusively to “kind of” relations. Both classonomies and partonomies are defined by relations of inclusion.) And there may be multiple levels of

¹⁷ Even if we understand root to be tree root, tree is not necessarily implied. One may encounter the part separated from the whole. Even when the tree has been cut down, we may still have to deal with the roots. On the other hand, when we encounter a pine, we have, in every case, encountered a tree.

¹⁸ This relation between the family partonomy and the family member classonomy, where the subordinate categories of the one are identical to the subordinate categories of the other (father, mother, sister, brother, etc. are common to both), seems to be representative of a class of paired domains. For instance, the classonomy for baseball team member (pitcher, shortstop, etc.) includes the same subcategories as the partonomy for baseball team.

of inclusiveness. The subordinate terms in a partonomy might be called “hypopartons” and the superordinate “hyperpartons.”¹⁹

Before proceeding further, I will need to clarify my terminology. The superordinate nodes (hypernyms) in a classonomy (i.e., those items comprising instances) are categories. The superordinate items (hyperpartons) in a partonomy (i.e., those items comprising parts) are, for lack of a better term, wholes. Although I sometimes refer to what I am doing here as categorization analysis, I mean that label to cover the study of whole-part as well as category-instance. Most wholes happen also to be categories (e.g., tree), but some are not; e.g., New York City, when thought of as including Columbus Circle, Times Square, and so forth, is a whole but not a category. Furthermore, I consider verbs to be categories. Walk, run, etc. are instances of move, so move is a category, but so also are walk and run, since they too comprise instances. My interest, then, is in expressions which, in one way or another, include other expressions, actions, objects, etc., or are included by other expressions. Categorization analysis, in my usage, includes the study of both classonomies and partonomies.

Classonomies and, to a lesser extent, partonomies are objects of study in what used to be called “ethnoscience.”²⁰ The aim of such study is (usually) to map the “culture” or the cognitive structures of the natives. Culture, in the tradition represented by the ethnoscientists, has been conceived as consisting of set elements, rules, habits, knowledge, etc., located in the minds of the natives (see Goodenough 1964 for a classic statement). This concept of culture is related to Chomsky's notion of competence. Thus, the study of folk taxonomies is generally considered to be part of “cognitive anthropology.”

¹⁹ Cruse (2011) uses holonym and meronym, but hyper- and hypoparton are more transparent and analogous to hypernym and hyponym.

²⁰ Ethnoscience is sometimes taken, by analogy with, say, ethnobotany, to be the study of folk “science,” particularly as it relates to classification of natural domains. But the word has also been used (as I am using it) to refer to the general approach of a group of ethnographers who devoted themselves to studying native knowledge and classification using formal techniques largely inspired by structural linguistics.

A major focus for those studying taxonomies in anthropology and linguistics and psycholinguistics has come to be generic (Berlin 1976, 1992; Berlin, Breedlove, and Raven 1974) or basic level (Lakoff 1987; Rosch 1977, 1978; Rosch, Mervis, Gray, Johnson, and Boyes-Braem 1976) categories. Basic level categories are those which are first learned, are most commonly used as labels (e.g., "car" as opposed to "vehicle"), are the highest level at which categories have similar shapes, about which we are the most knowledgeable, etc. These categories are discovered through interview and experimentation, and also, less formally, by noticing the most usual way that people refer to things. They are not discovered through observation of how participants construct their talk in actual occasions of interaction. So, while there may be some rough idea of frequency of occurrence, there is no close study of how specific variants are chosen in the course of situated talk. The study of basic level concepts is aimed toward elucidating static structures of cognitive salience.

Moreover, anthropological studies of folk taxonomy, in their effort to find fixed cultural/cognitive structures, tended to rely on mechanical "discovery procedures," modeled largely on idealized procedures in linguistic analysis. Frame elicitation and sorting tasks, so-called "white room" techniques, were especially favored (see Black and Metzger 1965 for a particularly stark example). These procedures are not appropriate or sufficient for constructing the occasioned taxonomies representing the structures developed in actual, temporally situated talk.

Sacks' Language-in-Use Approach

Although I will borrow certain elements of the anthropological/linguistic approach to folk taxonomy, my general orientation derives from the work of Harvey Sacks, particularly from his work on categories. However, I will begin my description of his approach with his discussion of another topic—proverbs.

It's a very usual use of proverbs among academics, to refer to them as 'propositions' and to suppose then that it goes without saying that the corpus of

proverbs is subject to the same kind of treatment as, for example, is scientific knowledge. They then build the basis for an inquiry...by virtue of the fact that these propositions, when compared—without showing that they are actually compared in their use—are inconsistent (Sacks 1992, Vol. 1: 105).

An example of inconsistency "in the corpus" might be: "Look before you leap" vs. "He who hesitates is lost." Sacks goes on to note that "...anything I've ever looked at [on proverbs] involves a list of proverbs and where they come from, their age, variations, etc. Nobody seems to deal with actual occasions of their use." (Sacks 1992, Vol. 1:106). Proverbs constitute "a stable body of knowledge" and we "control the domain of its use" (1992, Vol. 1:110). A proverb, that is, may be appropriate for certain situations, inappropriate for others. "The problem is not, on any given one's use, is it true relative to other proverbial expressions, but, does it, as something one understands with, understand what it applies to?" (1992, Vol. 2: 422). Proverbial expressions are "things to evidence understanding with" (1992, Vol. 2:422-3).

Sacks' approach to proverbs, and to categories as well, is to consider their use, within the occasions of their use. How are they deployed? What do they accomplish? This is his, Wittgensteinian, way of cutting through the Gordian knot of abstract perplexities posed by the uncontexted cultural corpus of proverbs. I will employ a similar strategy to finesse the conceptual tangles of linguistic taxonomy theory.

We can turn now to Sacks' treatment of categories, which, as we shall see, contrasts sharply with that of the anthropological taxonomists. The linguistic elements which are most loaded with meaning from a sociological point of view are categories. Sacks looks at categories as they are employed in talk, but the analysis is in terms of category relations and category features, and the knowledge produced is knowledge about categories—their selection, their structure, their associations and implications, and their use. I will not give a detailed description of the "apparatus" that Sacks proposes for analyzing membership categories. Sacks' approach to membership categorization analysis has been reviewed in various publications, perhaps most succinctly in Schegloff

(2007c). What is significant for my current purposes is his general orientation, described above in relation to proverbs, and made apparent in the following quotations:

Members can't do pure formulating. That is to say, you can't be engaged in 'merely'—non-consequentially, non-methodically, non-alternatively—saying 'This is, after all, a group therapy session'. To do that—even though you're merely invoking one thing that's true about this—is to do other things as well, e.g., put somebody down for something they said, propose special relevancies, propose that some topic ought to be discussed or not be discussed, invoke a status hierarchy, etc. At any rate, in each case that a formulation of a setting, or an identity, is done, that's something that has some line of consequences, and some analyzable bases, for participants, which can be one differentiated from another possible formulation, and also from not doing it at all (1992, Vol. 1: 516).

... for any population of persons present there are available alternative sets of categories that can be used on them. That then poses for us an utterly central task in our descriptions; to have some way of providing which set of categories operate in some scene—in the reporting of that scene or in its treatment as it is occurring (1992, Vol. 1: 116).

Sacks, that is, focused on the actual use of categories (and other sorts of formulations) in conversation, not on their status as elements in cognitive or linguistic structures. This is not to say that Sacks ignored the fact that categories were organized in structures. Indeed, his notions of collection and category device is precisely about category organization. And, as Watson (1978) has pointed out, devices may contain devices. (It must be noted, however, that the possibility of devices within devices has not received much attention within the Sacksian tradition of category analysis.)

If we look more carefully at the notion of membership categorization device (MCD), we find a surprising similarity to ethnosemantic analysis. Sacks (1974: 218) defines MCD as “any collection of membership categories...which may be applied to

some population...so as to provide, by the use of some rules of application, for the pairing of at least a population member and a categorization device member. A device is then a collection plus rules of application.” When we get devices within devices, we get taxonomic structures. But what about rules of application? Hester and Eglin (1997) understand Sacks to be referring to his rules of economy and consistency. (Economy rule: a single membership category is adequate to describe a member of some population. Consistency rule: if a category from some collection is used to describe a first member of some population, then that category or some other category from the same collection may be used to categorize further members of the population.) Admittedly, there is nothing quite like this in the analysis of folk taxonomies. But ethnosemantics does supply “rules...for the pairing of at least a population member and a categorization device member.” It attempts to locate the distinctive features which allow us to recognize a specific person (or thing) as a member of a particular category. This part of ethnosemantics is known as componential analysis. Whereas Sacks is asking how we choose this applicable category rather than that, the componential analyst is asking how we know that any particular category is applicable to a particular person or thing. There are severe problems with componential analysis (see, e.g., Eglin 1980; Keesing 1972; Tyler 1978; Wieder 1970), but it does constitute an attempt to add “rules of application” to taxonomic accounts. The crucial difference between the Sacksian and ethnosemantic accounts, lies less in the “machinery” proposed than in the fact that Sacks was attending to actual, in-context speech and the ethnosemanticists, who were primarily interested in culture and cognition, were not.

The notion of alternative categorization was not much developed in anthropological taxonomic studies, which were fixed on the pursuit of set, cultural forms. But it is certainly possible to encompass alternative categorization with taxonomic representation.

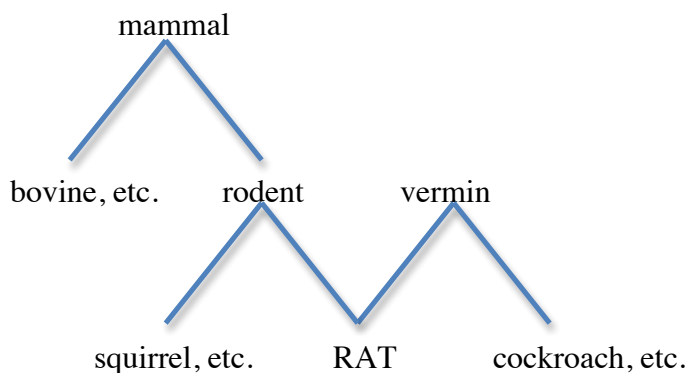


Figure 2.3

Although a rat is a type of rodent and also a type of vermin, rodent and vermin belong to different classonomies (different "devices" in Sacks' terms): "Rodents are mammals" is true; "Vermin are mammals" is not. Rats have certain features in common with all mammals and certain features in common with vermin, but the features that it shares with the one are not the same as those it shares with the other.²¹ So, Figure 2.3 might be called a "compound classonomy," since it comprises two different classonomies which happen to share a category.²²

We have noted that inclusion in a category implies co-categorization and contrast. We can turn the matter around and say that co-categorization and contrast implies a specific superordinate category. Thus, when we hear "rats and squirrels" (or, "rats, as opposed to squirrels") we may suppose that we are in a biological taxonomy in which "rodent" is the immediately superordinate term, whereas "rats and cockroaches" suggests "vermin." This is in accordance with what Sacks calls the "consistency rule corollary": "If two or more categories are used to categorize two or more Members to some

²¹This is a componential analytic account of the matter. A family-resemblances or prototype account would be different, but the basic point would not be affected.

²² This should, I think, be distinguished from polysemy—multiple related meanings. Rat is polysemous in that it is not only a type of animal but also a type of person. And it has uses as a verb as well. But when we say "Rats are rodents," we are using rat in the same sense as when we say "Rats are vermin."

population, and those categories can be heard as categories from the same collection, hear them that way" (1992, Vol. 1: 247.) Of course, "rats and squirrels" does not necessarily propose "rodent" or any other superordinate category. "He hates rats and squirrels" does not necessarily indicate that he hates all rodents. Maybe he just hates those two types of animal, both of which happen to be rodents. On the other hand, "He hates rats and squirrels and so forth" proposes some more general category, and rodent is a likely candidate. Also, sometimes context will tell us whether generalization to a more inclusive category is in order.

It is equally true that any category may have different sets of subcategories. Thus, the hypernym furniture may have as hyponyms table and chair, constituting one type of classonmy, or walnut and oak, constituting another. A category, that is, does not, or may not, automatically imply its relevant hyponyms any more than it, in itself, implies its relevant hypernym.²³ However, the mention of the category together with at least one hyponym implies its other hyponyms. When furniture is mentioned in conjunction with walnut, it is understood to be superordinate to a set including oak, not chair,²⁴ and, by virtue of the same pairing, it is understood that walnut is not to be understood as part of a set including cashew and hazelnut.

So, when we consider a category as an item in a taxonomic structure, there are at least three matters that need to be addressed. 1. Given that a category may belong to multiple taxonomies, which taxonomy is relevant for the situation at hand? 2. What is the position of the category in the taxonomy? Looking at a taxonomy "vertically," we can speak of the degree of generalization/inclusiveness or specificity/subsumption embodied in the category. Looking "horizontally," we can speak of contrast and co-categorization. Two categories included under a single hypernym (but not including one another) may be in contrast, either in the sense that they are mutually exclusive or that they are locally juxtaposed. In Bateson's (1955) terms, each forms a "proper ground" for the other, defining a frame of understanding and comparison. Oppositions imply

²³ It is not entirely clear to me whether the same can be said for paronomies.

²⁴ This, I suppose, is a complement to Sacks' consistency rule corollary.

common categorical membership. The corollary is that items that are so different that they are not co-members of any category are not juxtaposed. One does not, for instance, contrast badgers and basketball games.²⁵ When the focus is on the differences between two categories subsumed under a single hypernym, we speak of contrast. However, the fact that, say, a squirrel and a rat can both be categorized as rodents suggests similarity. When the focus is on similarity, we speak of co-categorization. These two dimensions of taxonomies—inclusion/subsumption and contrast/co-categorization—provide (along with scaling) foundational elements for a technical analysis of the structure of verbal formulations. 3. What is being accomplished through the choice of that particular category? What line of action does it advance or, perhaps, obstruct? What knowledge does it invoke?

This brings up Sacks' other main interest in categories, the fact that categories deliver a range of associated information (categories are, in his phrase, "inference rich"). When we classify a particular skin eruption as acne, we invoke certain knowledge concerning cause, progression, and treatment, different from that invoked by a classification of, say, melanoma. Moreover, Sacks points out that particular categories are associated with particular activities. Sharrock (1974) adds category-associated knowledge and Watson (1978) proposes "category predicates," which include rights and obligations associated with particular categories. Jayyusi (1984) expands the concept to "category-bound features," which includes category-associated activities, knowledge, rights and obligations, and "properties, habits, beliefs, etc." (35). Sacks observed further that the sort of knowledge conveyed may be relative to the category user. So, the meaning of "old" or "rich" may vary according to the speaker's age or economic status (1992, vol. 1: 45-6).

One further aspect of Sacks' contribution to the study of categorization, already alluded to, was his proposal of "rules" applying to category use. According to the

²⁵ Perhaps an inventive reader can conjure a situation where badgers and basketball games are contrasted. If so, there would be a category, at least an implied, occasioned category, that included both, and thus some point of similarity (e.g., they both begin with "b").

economy rule, “a single category from a membership categorization device can be referentially adequate”. The consistency rule states “If some population of persons is being categorized, and if a category from some device’s collection has been used to categorize a first member of the population, then that category or other categories of the same collection may be used to categorize further members of the population.” There is also, as previously mentioned, a corollary of the consistency rule which holds that “if two or more categories are used to categorize two or more members of some population, and these categories can be heard as categories from the same collection, then: Hear them that way.” Clearly, this does not exhaust the rules (“practices” or “maxims” might be better terms) that may be applicable to category use and interpretation. I propose some additional maxims in subsequent chapters.

Folk Taxonomies Reconsidered

I mention the anthropological approach to folk taxonomies in connection with Sacks' studies not only to provide a revealing contrast, but also because there are points of possible connection. To begin with, the tree structure visualization of folk taxonomy may be used for Sacks' "devices" as well. And, Charles Frake, a prominent student of folk taxonomy, took a more than passing interest in how his subjects talked (e.g. his 1964 article on how to ask for a drink in Subanun). In the area of folk taxonomy, he made a brief, but for me crucial observation that one may choose a term from a particular level of the taxonomy in order to include or leave out certain information (Frake 1961). Thus, for instance, by saying "I have a skin disease" rather than "I have this (named) skin disease," one may, without lying, leave out certain potentially embarrassing information. He hypothesizes that "the greater the number of distinct social contexts in which information about a particular phenomenon must be communicated, the greater the number of different levels of contrast into which that phenomenon is categorized" (121) (and, it would follow, the greater the number of choices that the speaker has in truthfully identifying that phenomenon). However, whereas Frake's focus was on the possibility of using higher levels of categorization to elide information, Sacks was interested in how

categorization adds information by suggesting how the categorized item is to be understood. This follows from Sacks' recognition that any item is subject to an indefinite number of possible categorizations (that is, it is a member of multiple taxonomies), and from the fact that categories have associated features and connotations.

Frake's insight points us away from cognition toward talk and interaction, in which categorical choices have implications for the business at hand. He provides the seed of a different approach to the matter, consistent with Wittgenstein's (1953) notions of use, Garfinkel's (1967) indexicality, and Sacks' (1992) treatment of categories in talk. Categories, as Edwards (1991) put it, are for talking, and this is what Frake had glimpsed. The actual use of categories is not simply a matter of actuating some pre-existing cognitive structure; rather, the taxonomic direction and level chosen is fitted to the local occasion of use and designed for specific hearers (on "recipient design," see especially Schegloff 1972).²⁶ Category usage is thus treated as a form of social action, not as a manifestation of culturally constituted minds.

However, Frake's account of generalization ends without applying it to actual occurrences of talk, nor is his account developed further by himself or other ethnosemanticists. Furthermore, Frake and other anthropological taxonomic theorists tended to be somewhat inattentive to the fact that words participate in multiple taxonomies, a result, perhaps, of their interest in cognitive structures as set features of the cultural mind. And they leave out of consideration certain conversational constraints in the choice of more generalized or more specific formulations of a particular phenomenon. Schegloff (1972), for example, shows how a speaker's choice in identifying a place is influenced by such matters as topic and interlocutor. Schegloff (2000: 717) also notes that the more general term will gloss a "subsumed order of events," (or, presumably,

²⁶ The earliest use of the term "recipient design" that I can find is in a Sacks' lecture from 1971 (Sacks 1992, Vol. 2:453). However, in several earlier lectures, he makes the point, in various ways, that talk is designed for hearers. And, of course, Bakhtin (1986) makes very much the same point. Also, although the phrase "recipient design" is not native to sociolinguistics, the notion underlies much sociolinguistic research.

places, persons, or whatever), but the taxonomic "reach" of the term (i.e., how many taxonomic levels and terms it subsumes) is not his primary interest.

Although my interest in categories (and formulation in general) is decidedly Sacksian, in that I attend to how categorization is used in actual talk, I think that diagramming category structure in the ethnosemantic style leads to a greater awareness and understanding of multiple levels of categorization, and to a deeper understanding of how meaning is structured in talk, and even helps to reveal meaning-constructional practices, as I will try to demonstrate in subsequent chapters. And, of course, it has the heuristic advantage of providing visualizations of possibly complex structures. These diagrammatic visualizations are, in effect, compact and easily comprehensible and memorable descriptions.

Proposals

I want to suggest an innovation to the notion of taxonomic structure. Some structures combine “kind of” and “part of” relations. So, for example:

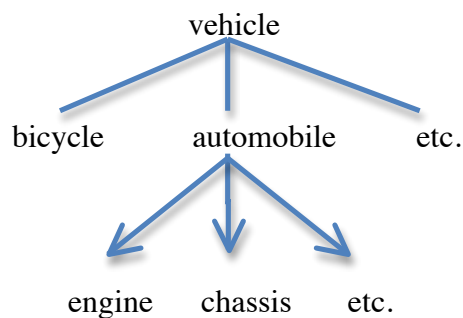


Figure 2.4

I call this a “hybrid taxonomy.” The plain lines represent “kind of” relations. So, bicycles and an automobiles are kinds of vehicle. The arrowed lines represent “part of” relations. Engines and chassis are parts of automobiles. One notable feature of hybrid taxonomies is that the “part of” relation is dominant, in the following sense. When \underline{z} is at

a lower taxonomic level than \underline{x} , no matter how many intervening levels there are between \underline{z} and \underline{x} , if even a single connection is partonomic, then \underline{z} will be said to be a part of \underline{x} . Thus, although an automobile is a kind of vehicle, an engine is a part of a vehicle because an engine is a part of a car. We will find, in Chapters 5 and 6, that we have analytical need for the notion of hybrid taxonomy.

A second proposal involves a redefinition of “taxonomy.” My proposed definition will encompass both class taxonomies and partonomies. However, again in response to analytical requirements, it will expand the idea of taxonomy in a major way. One significant similarity between the anthropological/linguistic approach and the Sacksian approach is that they both deal with reference; that is, they deal with categories which are reducible to collections of smaller scale categories and ultimately to specific items of reference (particular trees, mothers, sweaters, etc.). Some of the categories that I will be concerned with in the ensuing chapters do not do reference in this sense because the items that they collect are not themselves categories, but rather propositional constructions.²⁷ I will say, therefore, that **a taxonomy is a linguistic structure of inclusion and subsumption wherein units at each level, except the top, are encompassed by units at a higher level.**²⁸

It is to be noted that, contrary to the case in orthodox taxonomy theory, there is no requirement that the items at any level are mutually exclusive, nor that they be included in only one taxon (in Kay's [1971] terms, one "immediate predecessor") at the next higher level. Furthermore, whereas the particular objects comprised by a category are not included in the anthropological/linguistic notion of taxonomy, they may be included in my occasioned taxonomies. So, for instance, “this loblolly,” this particular tree, is categorized by the term “loblolly”; the individual item is not considered part of the tree

²⁷ In addition, I have already noted that there are inclusion structures, like the one on which Times Square and Columbus Circle are subsumed by Manhattan, where the terms are items of reference but not categories.

²⁸ Is inclusiveness the same as generality? Surely it is for classonomies. I think it is for partonomies as well. (E.g., “Car engines age; in fact, that applies to cars in general.”) But, to be on the safe side, I have phrased my definition in terms of inclusiveness.

taxonomy. The taxonomy consists exclusively of categories. However, I propose that occasioned taxonomies (talksonomies?) may include unique entities if those entities are mentioned in the talk. The taxonomy is an appurtenance; the essential matter is the structure of meaning in the talk.

To pursue this a bit further: we have noted that a classically conceived taxonomy would not allow “cowboy” and “bachelor” as hyponyms of “man” in the same taxonomy, because of the mutual exclusivity criterion. But, in an analysis of occasioned talk, if someone said “There are two kinds of men—cowboys and bachelors,” then our taxonomy would have “man” as hypernym and “cowboy” and “bachelor” as hyponyms, regardless of whether we take the hyponyms literally as overlapping categories or seek some special interpretation that would preserve mutual exclusivity. We are representing the talk, even when the talk does not accommodate itself to some ideal analytic structure. My diagrams represent only what is in, or implied by, the talk, regardless of linguistic/cultural or factual considerations. If the speaker mentions only two types of tree, then that is all that will appear in the diagram, even though it is common knowledge that there are more than two types of tree.

Another difference: The following is, in technical linguistic terms, unacceptable as a taxonomy:

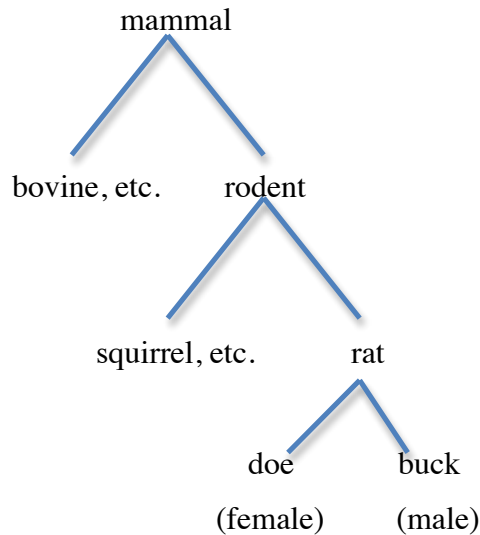


Figure 2.5

This is considered to be not a proper taxonomy because buck and doe introduce a new type of criterion (sex) rather than further specifying the type of relation that holds among its hypernyms and that distinguish its hypernyms from contrasting terms. However, the structure illustrated in Figure 2.5 meets the criterion that I have proposed—the terms at each level, except the top, are included in a term at the next higher level. When I speak of taxonomy, I include this type of structure, if this is what is developed in the talk under analysis.

Finally, I would like to propose another taxonomic relation, in addition to “kind of” and “part of”—“attribute of.” Actually, I think that attribute of is best conceived as a particular realization of part of, just as way of (as in “buying is a way of getting”) may be conceived as a realization of kind of. We will have occasion to consider this relation in Chapter 6.

The use of formal techniques of taxonomic, and even Sacks’ membership categorization, analysis may seem retrograde to those working in the traditions of Wittgenstein, ethnomethodology, and sequential conversation analysis, in that such formal techniques, as we shall see, presume or allow for a transituationally applicable

cultural input. In this regard, it should be noted that the taxonomic structure that is invoked at a particular juncture of conversation may be novel and spontaneous—it may not exist in any idealized cultural inventory. It may, that is, be brought into existence specifically for this moment, a new, artful, and usually transitory creation. And even when a taxonomic structure is culturally familiar, it must be invoked for the purpose at hand. In this sense, taxonomies, like categories, are for talking. The use of taxonomic diagrams to represent relations among linguistic units is not a move away from a contextual understanding of meaning. Nevertheless, any taxonomy (or other representation of meaning) is undeniably and inescapably based in the semantic potentialities of its component terms. The prophets of indexicality have made their point—their critique of culture and normative sociology is powerful. But some degree of reconciliation is possible and necessary (Bilmes 1986:158-9; Noren and Linell 2007). When we deal with language, we are, *ipso facto*, dealing with culture.

I conclude this chapter by reiterating my interest in taxonomies not as set cognitive or linguistic phenomena but as structures of meaning that are sequentially constructed in the course of verbal performance. (I use “verbal performance” here as an awkward way of including not only interactive talk but also monolog and even writing. However, my interest in this volume is exclusively with scenes of verbal interaction.) My present approach did not begin with the attempt to reconceptualize taxonomic analysis. Rather, it developed from an attempt to analyze a bit of recorded data (the data presented in chapter 7).

I am very aware that formal diagrams are not favored by conversation analysts in the Sacksian tradition. Diagrams are abstract (“bloodless,” as a critic of one of my presentations put it), removed from the actual data. Diagrams invoke the baggage of orthodox cognitive/cultural/structuralist social science. I am using them as compact descriptions of semantic relations that are demonstrably in the data-at-hand. But, ultimately, my defense rests on the outcomes of my studies, which, I would like to claim, are conversation analytic outcomes. That is, I (try to) achieve exactly the kind of insight that is sought by those working with a conversation analytic approach to categories and

formulation. I want to know what, for the participants, is going on here at this moment, and, more specifically, what meanings and meaning-relationships have they created.

In the following five chapters, I will present analyses of interactional sequences, using taxonomy as a central resource.

Chapter 3: Extended MCA

Although I do not intend to review the whole of Sacks' system for Membership Categorization Analysis, I will (re)state what I consider to be his major contributions in this area. Most importantly, he directed us to the observation of how categories are actually used by members in talk. He sensitized us to the cultural knowledge invoked by categories, including category-bound activities. He posited certain practices for the use and interpretation of categories. And he investigated the interrelationship of categories in talk. My analyses in this and succeeding chapters, while they do not, for the most part, attempt to implement Sacks' analytical "apparatus," are influenced at every point by Sacks' ideas.

Much of the work on categorization by Sacks and his followers has been on how items and subcategories are implicative of higher categories. The higher categories, in their turn, somehow explain or illuminate the use of the categorized items. Thus, for example, when a woman complains that she wants, as a gift, a sweater or a coat rather than an electric skillet, Sacks (1992, vol.2: 499-503) shows how sweater and coat are not understood as exclusively the items that she wants, but rather stand for a category of personal items, and how this understanding structures further talk. The examples implicate the category, which reflexively illuminates the examples. The reverse is also of potential interest: how are instances adduced to justify or add weight to the use of particular categories. This is an aspect of the study of categories-in-talk which has not been given much focused attention in the literature on conversation, but which will be central to the analysis in this chapter. However, the major point of the chapter is methodological, a demonstration of the usefulness of taxonomic representation in doing MCA.

The radio interview

The extract below is from a radio interview of a brothel manager. It is drawn from an excellent article by Samuel Lawrence on the discursive normalization of a stigmatized activity. The transcription is Lawrence's, with certain modifications, especially the addition of punctuation to indicate intonation.

(3.1) radio interview (Lawrence 1996)²⁹ Click on image to play recording (courtesy of S. Lawrence)

1. IR: ...are you saying in effect that .hhh you didn't
2. hurt anyone. (1) and you were providing a service.
3. IE: .hh Yes services were provided. .h Mister Mellish I
4. can tell you (.) I can remember a time when fathers (.3) .h
5. brought their sons there. .h to keep them from uh getting
6. young girls pregnant, (.7) .hhh uh picking up u:h (.4)
7. something off of the street, (1) picking up a venereal
8. disease, (1) .hhh u:h (.) I can remember a motherh that had
9. a somewhat retarded so:n, .h (1) that waited across the
10. tra:ck, (.4) wh- while he came down to (.) my hou:se, .h my
11. particular house: (.5) .hhhhhhhh u:h (.) I can remember
12. picking up the socialhh section of the newspaper, and seeing
13. young men that I knew as customers, .hh that married nice
14. gir:ls .hh uh but while they were courting, .h um while
15. they were (0.4) into u:h .hh u:h the relationship, .h they
16. didn't want they didn't want to go out on these girls.
17. (1.1) They used (.7) the house and its facilities. (2.3)



²⁹ The transcription is a somewhat modified version of that given in Lawrence (1996). In particular, I have added punctuation, which, as in conventional in CA, indicates intonation. My thanks to Lawrence for giving me access to the original recording.

18. IR: Rather than:: (0.5) wwhat is the saying violate:
 19. the one that they love. (.7)
 20. IE: Y:es. (.) or as opposed to going to a bar and maybe
 22. getting mixed up with a bar gir:l. .h o:r u::h (1.1) .hh
 23. (0.6) u::h there is a difference .h between a house
 24. girl and a street girl an' anything .hh we- u- let me
 25. define what street means that means any (.) .hh girl that
 26. works on the street .h or in a ta:vern (0.2) or- (.4) a
 27. massage parlor, (.4) .h where uh: (1) she doesn't
 28. have a place to live right along with it (.) those are
 29. street girls.

Kinds of girls: first account

We can get a deeper understanding of the meaning structure of this excerpt by considering how categories are deployed. The first two examples of “service” feature complementary sets of categories, what Sacks calls “standardized relational pairs.” The principles in the first example offered by IE are father and son; in the second, mother and son. The examples thus invoke family relations and family values, and the brothel is an instrument of those relations and values.

(3.2)

4. ...I can remember a time when fathers (.3) .h
 5. brought their sons there. .h to keep them from uh getting
 6. young girls pregnant, (.7) .hhh uh picking up u:h (.4)
 7. something off of the street, (1) picking up a venereal
 8. disease

The category “young girl” is explicitly mentioned. I would suggest that “street girl” and “house girl” are implicit (they are mentioned explicitly in lines

23-4). The house is indexically referred to as “there” and “the street” is mentioned in line 7. Of course, in each case, it is understood that it is the girl and not only the place that is being spoken of. The location is used to represent the sort of person who works in that location. So, a first try at a taxonomic representation might look like this:

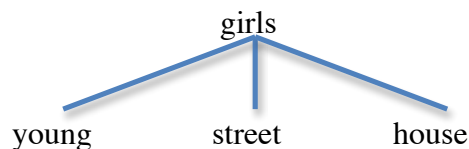


Figure 3.1

This does not capture the fact that she is specifically contrasting house girl with the others. She does not, for example, suggest that a street girl be preferred to a young girl, or vice versa, only that a house girl is preferable to both. That is, young girls and street girls are co-categorized in contrast to house girls. So, perhaps a better representation would be:

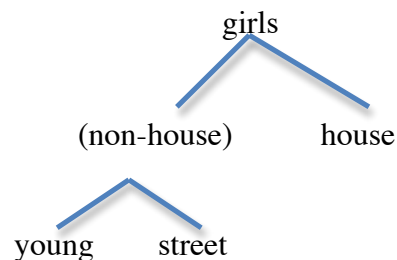


Figure 3.2

(The parenthesis indicates that the term is somehow implied. Strictly speaking, “house” should also be parenthesized, but it is clearly indexed by “there.” I will discuss the status of these implied categories below.)

I prefer a diagram that preserves the sense of “keep them from.” Young girls may get pregnant and street girls may carry disease. Both are therefore sources of trouble, unlike house girls.

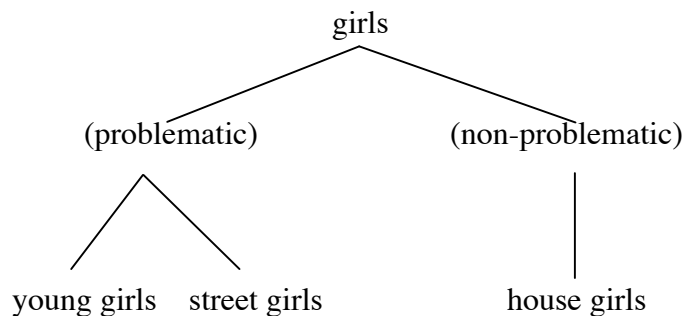


Figure 3.3

Young girls and street girls can be said to be co-categorized as persons that fathers saw as potential sources of trouble. House girls were the no-problem alternative. The collection of young girls and street girls into a single grouping, contrasting with house girls, is somewhat counterintuitive. It is not "pre-set" culturally or semantically. It is an occasioned grouping, serving IE's purposes of the moment.

Furthermore, as is evident from the progression from Figure 3.1 to Figure 3.3, a taxonomy, at least a taxonomic representation of talk, is an artful representation; artful in the sense that the transformation of talk to taxonomy is not a simple mechanical operation (as it might appear to be from a reading of much of the literature in ethnographic semantics). We have to make (supportable) judgments as to what is the best representation.

Kinds of girls: second account

In her final example IE, with IR's collaboration, constructs an alternative "girl" taxonomy. "Girls" is constructed as a complex category.

(3.3)

11. ... I can remember
12. picking up the socialhh section of the newspaper, and seeing
13. young men that I knew as customers, .hh that married nice
14. gir:ls .hh uh but while they were courting, .h um while
15. they were (0.4) into u:h .hh u:h the relationship, .h they
16. didn't want they didn't want to go out on these girls.
17. (1.1) They used (.7) the house and its facilities. (2.3)
18. IR: Rather than:: (0.5) wwhat is the saying violate:
19. the one that they love. (.7)
20. IE: Y:es. (.) or as opposed to going to a bar and maybe
22. getting mixed up with a bar gir:l. .h o:r u::h (1.1) .hh
23. (0.6) u::h there is a difference .h between a house
24. girl and a street girl an' anything .hh we- u- let me
25. define what street means that means any (.) .hh girl that
26. works on the street .h or in a ta:vern (0.2) or- (.4) a
27. massage parlor, (.4) .h where uh: (1) she doesn't
28. have a place to live right along with it (.) those are
29. street girls.

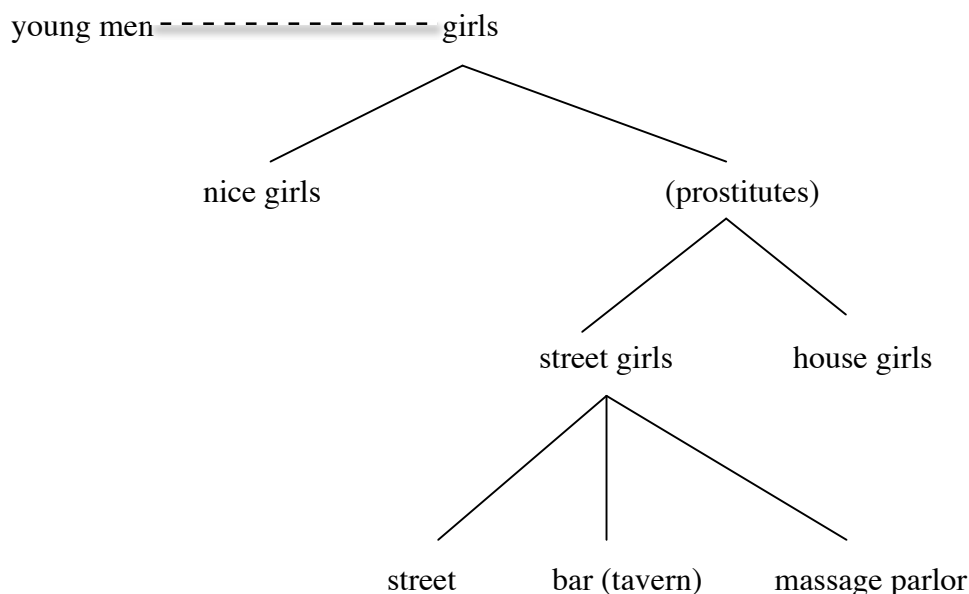


Figure 3.4

An implicit category

"Nice girls" are not only not prostitutes, they are virginal (or at least unavailable), unlike the "young girls" mentioned earlier. That is why the "young men" need alternatives. The alternative, in IE's telling is prostitutes—street girls or house girls. The category "prostitute" is not actually mentioned in the quoted excerpt, which is why it appears in parentheses in my taxonomy. Of course, house girls and street girls are prostitutes, but that is not adequate reason for entering the term in the taxonomy. Berlin, Breedlove, and Raven (1968) introduced the notion of "covert category," a category unlexicalized in the language but cognitively real for native speakers. They found that certain specific taxa were grouped together in the perceptions of Tzeltal speakers. These groupings were, in effect, categories in the Tzeltal plant taxonomy, but categories with no names. In English, prostitute is clearly not a covert category in Berlin et al.'s sense, since it is lexicalized, but, in the occasioned taxonomy illustrated in figure 3.4, prostitute is, I would claim, present and relevant but unmentioned. It is implicated. Let us say that it is,

on this occasion, an "implicit category." The presence of implicit categories can be demonstrated not by focused interviewing or sorting tasks or other methods of cognitive testing but by an indefinite array of pragmatic/discursive criteria.

The co-categorization of house girls and street girls as prostitutes is locally implied in two ways. First, the "as opposed to" juxtaposition of house girls and street girls suggests that they are members of a common category. That is, oppositions imply common categorical membership. Sacks makes a related point: "If two or more categories are used to categorize two or more Members to some population, and those categories can be heard as categories from the same collection, hear them that way" (1992, Vol. 1: 247.)³⁰ In some contexts, "house girl" might be understood as meaning housemaid. The juxtaposition with "street girl" indicates (redundantly, in this case) how house girl is to be understood in this context. House girl and street girl can be heard as "categories from the same collection," that collection being prostitute, so we hear them that way.³¹

Second, IE says that "there is a difference between a house girl and a street girl." The fact that she finds it necessary to mention this suggests that some people might not know the difference, that is, they might see them as essentially the same. So, we are directed to the feature that they share, namely, that they are prostitutes. The category "prostitute" is unmentioned, but it is implicated. It is present for the participants, rather than simply being an analytic convenience.

Girls and women

Females, in this interview, are referred to as "girls" rather than "women" and "girls" is a differentiated category, whereas "young men" is not. (Also, older

³⁰ Of course, two or more members may be hearable as categories from more than one collection. So, for instance, prairie dog and porcupine may be co-categorized as rodents or as animals whose names begin with "p".

³¹ Of course, street girls and house girls might also be heard as categories from the collection "girls." This suggests that Sacks' rule should be applied to the first (i.e., the closest) superordinate collection that comprises the categories.

men are absent from this accounting, although it seems likely that some of IE's clientele were not young. Presumably, this is because her services to families and to the community always involved younger men.) Young men would (typically) court young women, who might properly be referred to as "girls." But the use of "street girls" and "house girls" is accountable by some feature other than age. It seems that women in the sex industry are conventionally referred to as "girls." (Polly Adler, in her memoir, A House is Not a Home [1953], also refers to the women in her employ as girls.) On the other hand, "girls" in both senses share the feature of being female, in contrast to "young men." "Young girls" and "nice girls" seem to function as "females and not prostitutes" rather than, or in addition to, as age categories. And "nice girls" may be implicitly contrasted with the earlier mentioned "young girls," in that nice girls are not available as sex partners. This contrast can be recovered from her talk. In her first example, it was useful to have young girls as a source of sexual danger. In her third example, nice girls are a source of sexual frustration.

"Girl," as opposed to "woman," is a category for females who are relevantly either prostitutes or not. As regards the use of "girl," age is, at most, a consideration for non-prostitutes. The deployment of "girl" vs. "woman," for non-prostitutes, involves a complex of considerations, including age of subject, speaker, and recipient, relationship of speaker with recipient and with subject, speaker identity, current activity, activity being described, topic and tone of conversation, etc. Whereas mature (non-prostitute) women are sometimes referred to as "girls," when a prostitute is being referred to in her professional capacity, apparently "girl" is always the term used in preference to "woman." The non-prostitutes (in this interview) are girls (perhaps) because they are young; the prostitutes are girls because they are prostitutes.

Nice girls, street girls, house girls

It is notable that the sexually available "young girls" mentioned in the first example are not presented as alternatives in the third example. There are only nice girls and prostitutes. Prostitutes are the alternative to sex with "nice girls," and house girls are the alternative to street girls. Street girls (it is suggested in lines 6-7) may carry disease, whereas house girls are disease free. Moreover, the phrase "getting mixed up with a bar girl" seems to suggest the possibility of complications which would be absent in the case of house girls.³² The speaker presents the use of house girls not as a form of cheating (of "going out on") but rather as an alternative to cheating.

Thus, in her first category taxonomy, diagrammed in figure 3.3, IE presents house girls as the preferred sexual partners for young men, in contrast to all (!) other available sexual partners. In the second category taxonomy, diagrammed in figure 3.4, she focusses more narrowly on the choice between street girls and house girls, apparently eliding the category of sexually available young girls, while adding the new category of sexually unavailable nice girls.

IR speaks

The interviewer seems to understand IE's point as asserting that the alternative to having sex with prostitutes is having sex with the girl one is courting, an interpretation which she accepts. The sexual alternatives for engaged young men, then, are characterized as "violating the one they love," "going out," or using the brothel. The possibility of doing none of these actions, of simply abstaining, is not mentioned, nor is sex with other non-prostitutes explicitly considered as a possibility in her third example.

IR responds to IE, in lines 18-19, with "Rather than:: (0.5) wwhat is the saying violate: the one that they love (.7)" He recognizes that "violate" is a rather quaint usage, since he seems to be talking about normal sexual intercourse rather than rape or

³²Polly Adler (1953: 93) makes the same point: "He knew that they would be far safer there [at her house] than if they picked up girls on the streets."

perversion. He identifies his locution, after a .5 second pause, as a "saying." That is, he is merely quoting; the words are not his. The expression "the one that they love" is a specification of "nice girls."

We can look further into the sequential features of IR's comment:

(3.4)

11. IE: ... I can remember
 12. picking up the socialhh section of the newspaper, and seeing
 13. young men that I knew as customers, .hh that married nice
 14. gir:ls .hh uh but while they were courting, .h um while
 15. they were (0.4) into u:h .hh u:h the relationship, .h they
 16. didn't want they didn't want to go out on these girls.
 17. (1.1) They used (.7) the house and its facilities. (2.3)
 18. IR: Rather than:: (0.5) wwhat is the saying violate:
 19. the one that they love (.7)
 20. IE: Y:es (.) or as opposed to going to a bar and maybe
 22. getting mixed up with a bar gir:l. .h o:r u::h (1.1) .hh
 23. (0.6) u::h there is a difference .h between a house
 24. girl and a street girl an' anything .hh we- u- let me
 25. define what street means that means any (.) .hh girl that
 26. works on the street .h or in a ta:vern (0.2) or- (.4) a
 27. massage parlor, (.4) .h where uh: (1) she doesn't
 28. have a place to live right along with it (.) those are
 29. street girls.

IR's contribution is made at a point of grammatical and intonational completion. It is also preceded by a 2.3 second pause. So, the turn transition is more or less invited or at least made opportune. IR's utterance is formatted as a grammatical continuation of IE's last sentence. It is a formulation of what IE

might have said if she had continued her utterance. It is thus a (partial) formulation of what, in his estimation, IE was in the course of saying, what she was implying or portending with her talk-so-far. But, as a formulation of what IE meant (a "B event"), it requires, as Labov (1972:298-303) points out, a confirmation from IE, which it receives (see also Heritage and Watson 1979).

IR is invited, or at least has the clear opportunity, to comment twice. The first "invitation" is the 1.1 second pause at line 17, which comes at a "transition-relevance place" (Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson 1974). She mentions that the young men didn't want to "go out on" their "nice" girlfriends. She also mentions that they were customers. It might be understood that the men used the house while they were courting. However, when IR does not respond, IE adds another clause, resulting in another TRP, followed by a 2.3 second pause, and IR finally comments. Of course, IR might initially withhold a comment because he could not know whether her list of remembrances was complete. He might have been waiting for a more definitive invitation, which he got.

An ordered decision

"Rather than", in line 18, sets up an explicit contrast: use the house vs. violate the one that they love. IE accepts this contrast without hesitation. However, in her earlier talk (lines 14-16), it seems to be presupposed (rather than asserted) that the men are not having sexual intercourse with their fiancés (or eventually-to-be fiancés), and that they will have sex outside that relationship. The contrast she mentions is not between having sex with the "nice girl" or using the house, but rather between "going out" (apparently referring to sex with street girls) and using the house. IE makes this explicit when she, in lines 20-1, opposes using the house to "getting mixed up with a bar girl," later generalized to street girl. Given that she has spent her career in competition with street girls, this emphasis is understandable. One thing to be noted about these dichotomies is

that one member of the pair—in each case, using the house—is favored over the other.³³ A second observation: the two contrasts are ordered. That is, use of a prostitute's services, whether bar girl or house girl, is predicated on the fact that the man is not in a fully sexual relationship with his girlfriend. So, the logical order, although not the order of occurrence in the talk, is:

1. use the house vs. violate the one that they love (note, though, that his formulation would seem to allow for the use of street girls or, indeed, anyone other than "the one that they love" as another way of avoiding "violation").
2. use the house vs. patronizing bar girls (expanded to street girls, including those who work the street or massage parlors). This is actually invoked first in the contrast between "go out on these girls" and "used the house and its facilities". Figure 3.5 illustrates the chrono-logical relationships discussed in points 1 and 2:

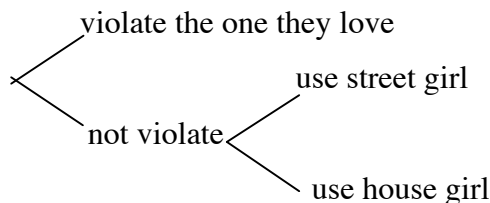


Figure 3.5

³³ We find a very similar weighted contrast in an interview with an Australian madam (2001), (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a0H5YqRrSdE>).

M; ...And I reckon a house girl is a better class of person. Because I (**) doctor (*) have all the facilities to use and everything and I think they're much cleaner than the street girls or nightclub girls or hotel girls. My girls have regular medical checkups every two weeks.

This introduces two categories—"nightclub girls" and "hotel girls"—which may or may not be included in IE's general street girl category.

Figure 3.5 might be called a "decision tree," in that it represents a set of ordered decisions. It is implicit in the talk that the young men in question would first decide not to have sex with their girlfriends and then chose between house girls and street girls. Figure 3.5 embodies the recognition that using the house is not the only alternative to "violation." So is "getting mixed up with a bar girl." There is no provision for the possibility of abstinence in the diagram or in the talk. Also, having sex with a non-prostitute does not seem to be (in the talk) a salient possibility.

Inside and outside

The use of the expression "go out on" seemed a bit unusual to me. Perhaps this is a matter of dialect, but a number of other formulations (e.g., "cheat on") would have sounded more natural to me. Also, why would sex with a street girl constitute "going out on" but not sex with a prostitute in a brothel? I think that IE's formulation—"go out on"—was (unconsciously) chosen in contrast to "the house." (Later, the contrast is formulated as street vs. house.) That is, IE is making a contrast between outside and inside. The distinction, to stretch the point to Levi-Straussian proportions, is between nature and culture. Inside is culture—tame, safe, and controlled. Outside is nature—wild, dangerous, and unpredictable, where one can get a venereal disease or get "mixed up" with a girl. Having sex with a house girl is, apart from the satisfaction of a biological urge, meaningless, without repercussions. This is its virtue. There are no diseases, threats, harassment, or imprecations, no needs on the part of the girl (other than payment), no surprises, and no chance of emotional involvement. House sex transforms some intensely personal doings into an impersonal business transaction. The image of the house as the "civilized" alternative is reinforced by IE's previous claims of good citizenship (paid taxes, gave to charity).

Street girls and house girls

Another contrast—house girl vs. street girl—is set up by "difference between" (line 23). Street girl is used at two levels of the taxonomy.

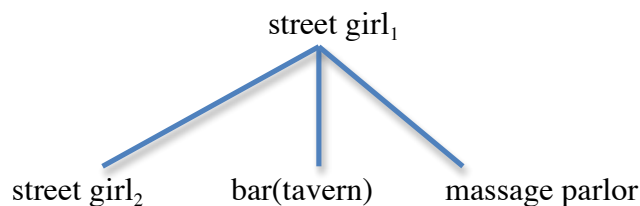


Figure 3.6

I am assuming that, since a prostitute who works in a tavern (i.e., bar) is a bar girl, one who works on the street is a street girl. The use of the same expression in a general (unmarked) and a specific (marked) sense (autohyponymy) is common in English and many, if not all, other languages. For clarity of reference, I will use street girl₁ for the more general, “unmarked” usage, and street girl₂ for the more specific usage.

The category set “house girl-street girl₁” might seem to be an exhaustive listing of prostitute types. The criterion which, in IE’s formulation, distinguishes the two is working where one lives. It would seem that there are only two possibilities: the girl either lives where she works (house girl) or she doesn’t (street girl₁). The young men looking for a prostitute can choose either street girls or house girls. Her ostensive definition of street girls (works on the street or in a tavern or massage parlor) may also be offered as an exhaustive listing. That is, any listing without an “etc.” or other indication of incompleteness suggests possible completeness. But there is a problem with the intensional definition that she adds on—“she doesn’t have a place to live right along with it (.) those are street girls”. Presumably, this means that, if she does not live in the place where she finds or services clients, she is a street girl. However, there is at least one other major category of prostitute who is not a house girl but is also not usually referred to as a street girl, and that is a call girl. In fact, Heidi Fleiss, a famous Hollywood madam, makes an explicit distinction between the call girl prostitution that she was involved in and the “sleazy side of the sex business,” which she identifies with “street

corner girls.”³⁴ (Perhaps there were no call girls in the locality where IE worked.) And how would IE deal with the prostitute who worked in a brothel but did not live there?³⁵ She recognizes, early in the interview that such cases existed, but surely she would characterize the women who worked there as house girls (or call girls?) rather than street girls.

IE’s “let me define” seems to claim that the meaning of street girl is conventional but specialized, not known to all. However, IE’s definition of street girl₁ appears to be idiosyncratic or perhaps local. It may even be the case that she made up a definition specifically for this occasion. I have been unable to find such a definition elsewhere. Street girl is commonly defined as “a prostitute who attracts customers by walking the streets.” This is what IE means by street girl₂. We can understand IE’s need for the more general term. She manages a brothel, so, no doubt, she has occasional need to make a general contrast between house girls and other prostitutes who are not house girls.³⁶

³⁴Craig Kilborn interviews Heidi Fleiss (Los Angeles madam) on Late Late Show (2011) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=obZqkYHVjZk>

CG: ...The L.A. police knew that you were doing this for years right?

HF: I don't know what they knew and didn't know but um (.) it was consensual sex there was nothing n there was no: nothing that weird going on.

CG: But it was prostitution so it was illegal.

HF: Well uh prostitution's illegal an' uh w- when you say prostitution you think of of street corner girls and (.) and pimps and you just don- you think of it in a different context of [uh

CG: [This was an escort service. ((mugs))

HF: Well ((audience laughter)) pa- in Pandering: (.5) in my book Pandering you really get an inside look at how: (.) my world was different I mean I really tried to separate myself from the sleazy side of the sex business.

³⁵ In fact, early in the interview, she contrasts her house with Polly Adler’s on the basis that her house was also a home for her girls. Until 1935, some, but apparently not all, of Adler's girls slept in. After that, she was, in her words, a "call-house madam" (1953:335).

Furthermore, in some places where prostitution is legal or tolerated, prostitutes will work out of their home, using (euphemistic) signs or other forms of advertising to lure clientele. I doubt if IE would classify these as house girls.

³⁶The fact that IE’s construction of the semantic field may be inaccurate or incomplete (i.e., a departure from “proper” usage) or even idiosyncratic is of no particular relevance

IE begins with an opposition between house girl and bar girl. She then generalizes bar girl to street girl₁. Frake (1961) found that using a general category in place of a specific one elides information. (This is recognized in everyday talk when we say that someone spoke in vague generalities.) So, for instance, "She is a street girl₁" is less informative than "She is a bar girl." The latter conveys that she is a street girl₁ plus some additional information. On the other hand, generalizing a negative statement increases the conveyed information. So, "She is not a street girl₁ is more informative than "She is not a bar girl," since it rules out some additional possibilities. In the present case, where the contrast between bar girl and house girl is transformed into a wider contrast between street girl₁ and house girl, information is also increased. The "rule" is: *When a term, X_i, in the hierarchical array X_{1-n}, is to be contrasted with some term, Y_i, in the hierarchical array Y_{1-n}, the most general form of X and Y that maintains the contrast will maximize communicated semantic³⁷ information.* So, as a contrast to house girl, street girl₁ is chosen in preference to bar girl. If we generalize further, to prostitute, the contrast will be lost. Although, in the event, I may be contrasting my collie to your Persian cat, rather than say "Collies are smarter than Persian cats," I will (assuming I believe it to be true and that I want to maximize communicated information) say "Dogs are smarter than cats." That is, I will choose the more general forms of both X and Y.³⁸

for our analysis. She has presented her definition as a local expert, and her presentation goes uncontested. It's rightness or wrongness is not at issue.

³⁷In some cases, as with the form "It's not [this], it's [that]," information about the individual is increased by using a more specific term in the positive clause. E.g., "She's not a house girl, she's a bar girl" vs. "She's not a house girl, she's a street girl₁." The first formulation gives us more information about her. But the second formulation, by making a distinction between house girl and street girl₁ (including but not limited to bar girl), gives us more semantic information. It tells us that a house girl is different not only from bar girls but from girls who work the streets and massage parlors.

³⁸ Of course, we could generalize still further to canines and felines, but most of us have less certain knowledge at this level of generality. Dogs and cats are familiar animals whereas few of us have extensive firsthand knowledge of wolves or leopards or of all the other animals comprised by those terms. Furthermore, canine and feline, although widely understood, are somewhat specialized words, not very common in everyday talk.

Is IE's definition of street girl₁ occasioned only or in the language? IE seems to present it as in the language ("Let me define..."), but she recognizes that it is a specialized language, so she explains. There are, IE asserts, distinctions to be made among prostitutes, with house girls being the best choice. Words like "prostitute," "whore," etc. are avoided by IE but viewing street girls₁ and house girls as alternatives makes the overall category (i.e., prostitute) implicit. Toward the beginning of the interview, IR asks "Were you running a house of prostitution" to which IE, after a .5 second pause, replies "Yes sir". But, in the entire 28 minute interview, IE uses the word "prostitute" only once, well into the second half of the interview,³⁹ and never uses words like "whore" or even "sex" or "sexual." "Bordello" is as far as she goes in referring to what went on in her "house." As Lawrence (1996: 182) notes: "Her reports and descriptions move stigmatized matters to the background—that is, what her business consisted of."

Young men

The males in the third example, although young, are referred to as "men" rather than "boys." One might be tempted to account for this as a manifestation of the dignity accorded to males and withheld from females in American society. There is, however, a more local explanation. A brothel that serviced boys would surely be viewed in a more negative light than one that serviced men. In the first two examples, age is not an issue,

³⁹ It might be worthwhile to consider her lone usage of "prostitute." She is explaining that the prosecutor's previously "reasonable" and "nice" attitude had changed:

IE: ...but uh I think it changed .hhh I think the idea (2) of uh: (3) us being prostitutes (.) was very undesirable to him.

Her hesitations make it appear that she is reluctant to use the term prostitute. She includes herself in the formulation, although she apparently had not worked as one for some time. (She said earlier that she had been a "working girl" before her career as madam.) The use of this stigmatized formulation helps to make credible her claim that the prosecutor was biased against her.

since the "sons" are brought there by their parents. This relieves the madam of any responsibility for debauching immature males.

The young man category is not broken down into subcategories, whereas girl is. We might imagine that, if the subject was day-to-day management of the brothel, it would be males who were broken down into subtypes. A mundane problem of brothel management, one supposes, is the handling of different types of men. But, in the present case, the madam is talking about the role of the house in the community. This calls for a different sort of category elaboration.

Taxonomic extension of MCA

My analysis above is basically, although not exclusively,⁴⁰ on Sacks-inspired membership categorization analysis. It has taken an in-use, indexical, participant-oriented approach to conversational data. It includes various cultural observations, but Sacks, too, invoked cultural knowledge when it suited his purposes. I have sought, as did Sacks, for a somewhat formalized way of dealing with the data, an "apparatus," to use one of Sacks' favorite terms, although my use of taxonomy is heuristic and representational rather than analytic.

Nevertheless, the process of constructing and contemplating the taxonomic structures produced certain analytic insights. I found that the short interview segment under consideration produced some structural complexities. In particular, there were two different "girl" taxonomies. I found that mechanical "discovery procedures," such as those used in ethnosemantic frame elicitation, were not sufficient for constructing the occasioned taxonomies representing the structures developed in talk. Sometimes, the speaker might present us with ready-made taxonomic relations—IE's definition of street girls₁ seemed to be presented as "in the language." On the other hand, this could have been a category that she invented for the purposes of this particular conversation. We also had to deal with indexicality (e.g., "there" in line 5 standing for the bordello is a

⁴⁰ There are, for example, elements borrowed from hermeneutics and anthropological structuralism and, of course, from sequential analysis.

linguistically grounded example) and implicit categories. I argued that “prostitute” was an unmentioned but implicated category. Also, I suggested that “keep from,” together with the associated reasons, suggested a classification of different kinds of “girls” as either problematic or not. These were not the only categories available. For instance, I might, as an analyst, have chosen to categorize prostitutes in terms of how much danger their particular mode of operation put them in. But this would have imposed my relevancies or theoretical or ideological preoccupations on the analysis. My goal, on the contrary, was to produce an analysis that represented the relevancies of the participants. My taxonomies were, to some extent, an “artful” creation; they were not precise representations of what the speakers said. But neither were they simply my impositions on the data. They were supportable understandings of what the participants actually said.

One outcome, then, of the use of taxonomic representation was the discovery of implicit categories. Another was the formulation of a procedure for maximizing information, using a contrast rule: roughly, make contrasts in the most general forms possible. Another finding was that the taxonomies that we derive from actual instances of talk are not fixed structures in the language or in the native mind. They are for-the-moment constructions, although some may also be, or be claimed to be, more stable linguistic or cognitive structures. So, within a short segment of talk, we find two different taxonomic representations of “girl,” as illustrated in Figures 3.3 and 3.4. It is, in fact, hard for me to say how much of my analysis followed from my taxonomic focus, but I am fairly certain that it led me to see things that I would not have otherwise seen.

One final point on the virtues of taxonomic representation. A diagram such as Figure 3.4 is a very economical representation of a complex categorical structure. As such, it is an aid to memory and understanding. My taxonomical diagrams are simply representations of what the analyst would (or could) at any rate say about the data, and they can be faithful to a participant-oriented approach tied to the details of actual occasions of talk.

Chapter 4: Beyond MCA

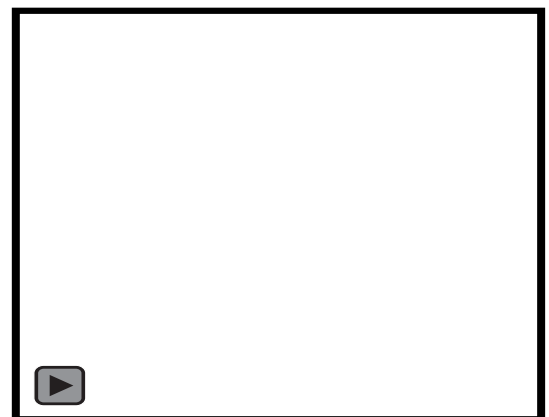
Having made my case for the employment of taxonomic representation in the analysis of person categories, I would now like to propose a further extension both to the notion of taxonomy and to MCA. In fact, we will transgress the boundaries of MCA in two respects: we will be considering matters other than membership and we will be dealing with categorizable items which are neither terms nor specific objects but rather propositional constructions. I will focus on the use of examples, a subject matter that has not been given a great deal of attention in CA and MCA.

Listing examples

My main object of consideration will, once again, be the radio interview discussed in the Chapter 3. I will begin, though, with another bit of data.

(4.1) Lyndon B. Johnson, August 4, 1964, 9:43 a.m. Telephone conversation with Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara regarding Gulf of Tonkin (Transcribed by Eric Hauser) Click on image to play recording

1. X: off limits.
2. (0.8) ((sound of phone receiver moving))
3. J: hello.
4. S: .nh Secretary McNamara's calling you a↑gain
5. ↑sir. (0.4)
6. S: on oh↑:
7. (1.4) ((phone sounds))
8. M: Mister President_ ↓uh (.) ↑General Wheeler and I are sitting here together.=we just
9. received a cable from .hhh Admiral Shar:p .hh making three recommendations



10. with respect to our: destroyer tracks an:' (.) ↑enemy ↓uh (.) ↑action responses.=↑an'
11. I wanted t' mention this to you with a recommen [dation.=↑I've=
12. J: [(okay).
13. [↑(x)
14. M: = [discussed this with- (0.4) with Dean Rusk an' he 'n'- .hh 'n' I >are in agreement
15. on the recommendations. <↑Sharp recommends first that (0.4) thee uh: (0.4) thee
16. ↑track of the destroyer be shifted from eleven miles offshore to eight miles
17. offshore:. ↑this makes no: sense to us.=we would recommend against it. (0.6)
18. M: uh: ↑his purpose (.) by: ↑shifting the track [is simply t' make clear: that we- [we=
19. J: [hh [°mhm°
20. M: =believe the twelve mile limit is not an effective limit on us. (0.3)
21. M: ↑we don'- ↑we think we do that adequately by: >sailing at eleven miles< as
22. opposed to eight. (0.8)
23. M: ↑secondly ↑Sharp recommends that we authorize the [task]
24. J: ['n' what] reason does 'e give
25. for 'is eight.
26. M: °(it is)° ↑simply that it more clearly
27. indicates our (0.3) our refusal to accept eigh ((a)) twelve mile restriction.=↑we
28. think we have clearly indicated our refusal to accept a twelve mile restriction with
29. thee (0.3) with thee eleven mile limit=we see no need to change the track at this
30. ti:me.=
31. J: =.hh ↑why: ↑what=uh ↑what other objections do you have.
32. (0.8)
33. M: ↑it- ↓it ↓uh:: (0.3) ↑changes a program that- that ↓uh:: (0.5) shouldn't be changed
34. frequently.=↑these orders are very precise, =the tracks are laid down very
35. clearly,=they go through the three command channels t' get out there, .h (.) ↑this
36. ship is allegedly uh↓: (.) ↑to be attacked tonight,=>we don' like t' see a< change in
37. operation plan of this kind a- ↑at this ti:me. (0.6) >↑an' we don' think it achieves
38. any< ↓any uh> ↑in'ernational purpose=↑so no-↑certainly no< military purpose is

- 39. served by it.
- 40. (1.9)
- 41. J: .thh >all right.<
- 42. (0.3)
- 43. M: †secondly:: he recommends that thee task force commander be authori:zed (0.4) to
- 45. pursue thee attacking vessels >in the event he is attacked< (.) an' destroy their
- 46. bases.

My interest is in lines 31-39. Here is a diagram representing some of the important relationships.

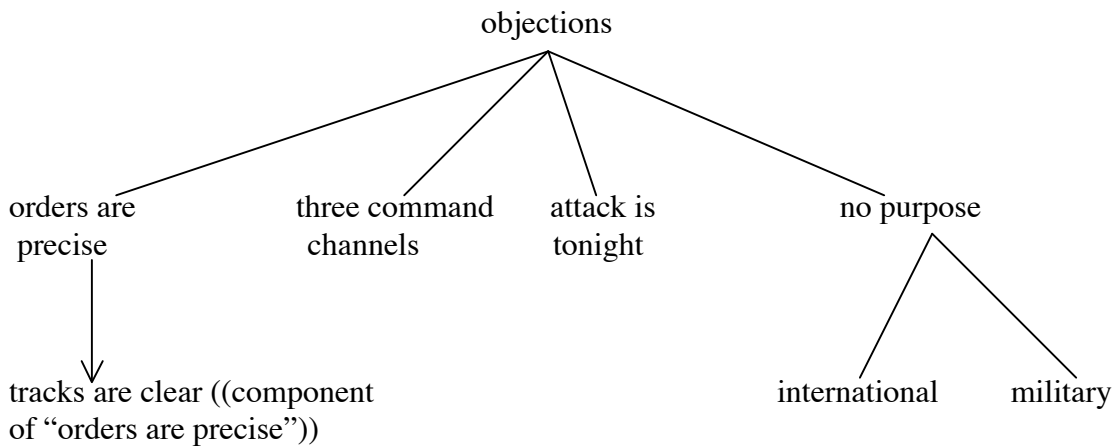


Figure 4.1

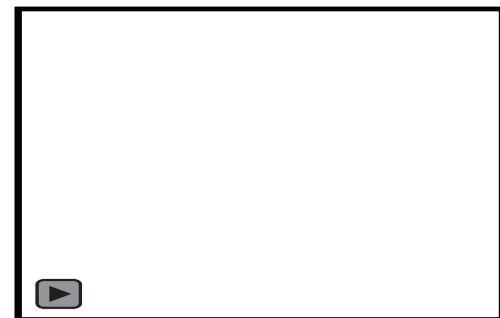
M's statements in lines 34-39 are, if taken out of context, a heterogeneous set. "orders are precise" and "tracks are clear" have a semantic connection (part/whole), but what is the connection to "attack is tonight" and "no purpose"? Nevertheless, they are here, in this context, members of a single collection—"objections" to changing the track of the destroyer. That is, they are, by virtue of being an answer to Johnson's question, classified as objections. As Sacks (1992, Vol. 1: 757) put it: "...some items are co-class members by virtue of being members of a class for a topic...". The coherence of

McNamara’s list is, therefore, occasioned. The claim is being made, in listing these as objections to changing the plan, that these facts constitute reasons, arguments pertaining to a particular action. So, for example, “the orders are very precise” is not inherently an objection. Although “the orders are very precise” or “this ship is allegedly to be attacked tonight” are meaningful statements (i.e., grammatically and semantically transparent), their local function is accessible only by virtue of their context and, in particular, of their classification as objections.

So, the first point that I want to make with this transcribed segment (I will return to it later) is that the comprehension of items of talk, of examples in particular, may depend on a particular indexical aspect, namely, how the items are categorized. Without the categorization, we may not see the listed items as examples, and, even if we do, we may not understand what they are meant to exemplify. A similar point can be made in connection with the radio interview segment that we examined in the previous chapter. Here it is again:

(4.2) radio interview (Lawrence 1996) Click on image to play recording

1. IR: ...are you saying in effect that .hhh you didn't
2. hurt anyone. (1) and you were providing a service.
3. IE: .hh Yes services were provided. .h Mister Mellish I
4. can tell you (.) I can remember a time when fathers (.3) .h
5. brought their sons there. .h to keep them from uh getting
6. young girls pregnant, (.7) .hhh uh picking up u:h (.4)
7. something off of the street, (1) picking up a venereal
8. disease, (1) .hhh u:h (.) I can remember a motherh that had
9. a somewhat retarded so:n, .h (1) that waited across the
10. tra:ck, (.4) wh- while he came down to (.) my hou:se, .h my
11. particular house: (.5) .hhhhhhhh u:h (.) I can remember
12. picking up the socialhh section of the newspaper, and seeing
13. young men that I knew as customers, .hh that married nice



14. gir:ls .hh uh but while they were courting, .h um while
 15. they were (0.4) into u:h .hh u:h the relationship, .h they
 16. didn't want they didn't want to go out on these girls.
 17. (1.1) They used (.7) the house and its facilities. (2.3)
 18. IR: Rather than:: (0.5) wwhat is the saying violate:
 19. the one that they love. (.7)
 20. IE: Y:es. (.) or as opposed to going to a bar and maybe
 22. getting mixed up with a bar gir:l. .h o:r u::h (1.1) .hh
 23. (0.6) u::h there is a difference .h between a house
 24. girl and a street girl an' anything .hh we- u- let me
 25. define what street means that means any (.) .hh girl that
 26. works on the street .h or in a ta:vern (0.2) or- (.4) a
 27. massage parlor, (.4) .h where uh: (1) she doesn't
 28. have a place to live right along with it (.) those are
 29. street girls.

IE's examples—fathers brought sons, mother brought retarded son, young men used house to avoid “going out”—have a clear semantic relation in that they all involve the same sort of activity—going to the house. But there are other examples of the same sort of activity (e.g., men going to the house to fulfill some sexual fantasy) which do not belong on this list. That is, the sort of “services” that she is referring to is illustrated by the three examples that she mentions, but not by my hypothetical fourth. (And we know what sort of service that is because of the examples offered.) In this case, the classifying term (services) provides not so much for the coherence of the list as for its boundaries. And, crucially, it tells us how to understand the items on the list (i.e., as services).

The first two examples might, in other contexts, be taken to illustrate poor parenting or, perhaps, parental love. That, on the contrary, they exemplify the brothel's service to the community is made visible by the fact that they are preclassified as service. Moreover, the first two examples seem to more closely related to one another (by virtue

of the common filial relation) than they are to the third. There is a potential discontinuity which is obviated by the common categorization.

Here is a representation of the structure of this segment:

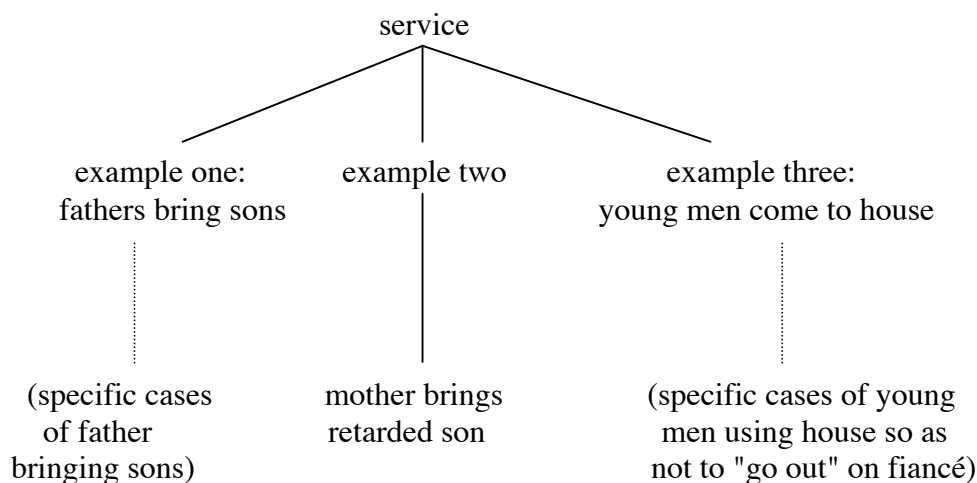


Figure 4.2

(The items in parentheses did not occur in the talk. I include them only as a way of indicating that a further level of specificity was possible.)

It will be noted that, in both Figure 4.1 and Figure 4.2, the categorized items are propositions/descriptions rather than categories or objects. My interest is in the fact that we can use this sort of diagram to illustrate the relationship among the items involved. This is in accordance with my redefinition of **taxonomy** as a linguistic structure of inclusion and subsumption wherein units at each level, except the top, are encompassed by units at a higher level. The units in such a taxonomic structure are formulations, possibly but not necessarily categories.

Service

The examples here are stories of services provided. Brothels, by definition, provide a service. When IR says "you were providing a service," he appears to be referring to sexual service. IE has mentioned earlier that she and her employees lived in town, paid taxes, and contributed to charity, but none of

these would ordinarily be seen as "providing a service." But the examples offered in IE's response make clear that she is interpreting "service" as something other than, or at least more than, sexual service.⁴¹ I would like to make a few comments on the sort of world IE is constructing. In the second example, the mother with her borderline retarded son, it is understood that the mother brought him there rather than, say, followed him. One reason that we assume this is because this interpretation is consistent with the previous example (fathers bring sons), and because it fits with the claim of "service." Furthermore, the reason that she brought him there (presumably to allow him to have a life experience that would otherwise be unavailable to him) is understood, based on cultural assumptions (or, at least, common knowledge). This contrasts with the first example, where she explains why fathers brought their sons, and the third example. The first and third examples are, to me, rather odd. How frequently would a young man need to visit a brothel to work off his sexual urges? How much would that cost? For how many years? Is going to a brothel really preferable to having a "normal" social/sexual life? IE seems to present it as the moral alternative. And the notion that a young man's sexual behavior is based entirely on physical urges seems somewhat naïve. Her view of sex seems rather mechanical, or, rather, biological. Young men require sex. Sex with one woman is equivalent to sex with another, except that sex with some women can be complicated and bothersome. We provide it with no fuss, no complications.⁴²

⁴¹ Nevertheless, sexual services are implicated. It is very notable that IE reformulates "you were providing a service" to "services were provided". I can only speculate that this transformation is a way of avoiding the possible implication that she, personally, provided sexual services. Indeed, she notes a few turns earlier in the interview that "before my uh career as a madam .h I was a working gir:lh". However, much later in the interview, she mentions the fact of "us being prostitutes" in speculating about the prosecutor's possible prejudice against her. So, her categorization of herself as prostitute or not-prostitute seems to be sensitive to the purposes of the moment.

⁴² Polly Adler (1953:325) gives a somewhat similar account:

The second example is an event. The first and third examples are repeated events (and thus, perhaps, categories of a sort—they comprise their own instances). In one sense, each of the accounted events are the same: male receives sexual service. The elements that make each case a "service" in a different sense have to do with the purposes and consequences of the encounters: giving a retarded man a life experience or keeping young men from contracting disease or getting girls pregnant or "going out" on girls they were courting

It is not entirely clear what IR is referring to when he says in line 1 that "you were providing a service." I think the most accessible interpretation is "sexual service." IE, though, proceeds to define "service" as service to family and community. That is, she picks up on the word "service," but defines its meaning in a particular way. By using examples, she disguises the fact that she has, while seemingly agreeing with him, interpreted the word in a way that went beyond what might be its normal hearing in that context.

Taxonomy reconsidered

One important difference between classic ethnosemantic taxonomies and taxonomy in my broader usage, as mentioned in Chapter 2, is that, in the classic

But perhaps my biggest responsibility was to my young clients. Often boys were brought to my place by their fathers.... ..they believed that this was the wisest and best way of handling one of the most difficult problems a father has to face. They knew the physical and emotional damage that can result if a youth begins his sex life with some furtive, sordid episode which may forever make ugly and shameful this aspect of human nature. They realized the importance of a satisfying and psychologically right initial sex experience, with nothing undignified nor cheap about it....

She is one with IE in claiming the house to be a superior alternative (although, unlike IE, she does not specify what exactly it is superior to), but she is referring only to an initial experience.

It is also notable that, whereas the fathers in IE's account apparently enter the house with their sons, the mother does not. The house is not a place for women, except for the house girls and the madam.

formulation, the individual items designated by the lowest level taxa are not part of the taxonomy. In a taxonomy of talk, however, we must represent what is actually said. “A mother brought her son” is not a category or set. It is a specific, ultimate realization of the term “service,” just as “the loblolly growing in my back yard” is a specific realization of the tree taxonomy. It is part of the taxonomic representation of the structure of meaning in this interview because it is present in the talk. By the same token, specific instances of fathers bringing their sons to the house are not included in the taxonomy because they are not present in the talk. (Actually, for heuristic purposes, I have indicated in Figure 4.2 the theoretical possibility of such specific instances. This was done to make clear why I placed example two on a different taxonomic level from one and three.) Similarly, as we saw in Chapter 3, call girls were not represented in the implicit semantic field, prostitute, because IE did not mention or implicate them. Such instances might have been elicited by the interviewer, in which case they would appear in the taxonomy, but they were not.

We have, in IE’s description of services performed, a multi-level taxonomy, given that we place example two on a lower level than one and three. Examples one and three are plurals, implying a further level of unique instances. Perhaps these instances are not supplied because the plurals already contain the features that the speaker wishes to express. There is no need to enumerate each individual episode if those episodes are not relevantly different. Fraake (1961) makes the point that using a higher level of categorization (or a category rather than a specific individual instance) may enable one to avoid giving explicit, potentially embarrassing information, but, of course, it can also facilitate economy of expression by allowing one to delete unnecessary information. There is, for example, no need to enumerate specific instances of fathers bringing sons if each instance illustrates the same point. Example two is a unique instance in itself. Presumably, it only happened once, or at least with only one set of individuals.

Function of examples

The presentation of examples one, two, and three support the claim of service. Such examples, although unsupported by evidence, seem nevertheless to function as a kind of evidence. Giving examples, first of all, shows how the claim of service could be true. But, of course, there is no evidence that the examples are in fact true. Mentioning specific instances of examples one and three, with the added detail that differentiates one occurrence from another, would similarly add support to those examples, although, again, the stories might be invented. (So, there is at least one reason why IE might want to mention specific examples, even if each of the examples illustrates the same point.)

Another function of examples is to clarify or elaborate the meaning of the item being exemplified. In the case before us, “service” could be understood as simply the provision of female sexual partners to male clients. However, the examples make clear that IE’s use of the term is to be understood in a somewhat different sense.

An example is always part of a list, or implies a list. If we are dealing with a particular thing, event, assertion, or whatever, which is not to be understood as one of a plurality of such things, we are not dealing with an example. The example does not have to be “concrete”; it simply must be more specific than the item of which it is an instance (Wasterfors and Holsanova 2005).

Although exemplification has not, to my knowledge, been topicalized to any great extent in CA, it is too common a phenomenon to go unmentioned. An early (ethnomethodological) example:

...faced with the “muddiness” of my descriptor “honest”—a “muddiness” which may very well be accentuated in decontextualized or “philosophical” discussions of the term—my questioner may well ask, and ask legitimately, “how do you mean: honest?” And in answer I will elaborate my descriptor, not by elaborating definitions, but with

a tale of what my friend did when he found a wallet in the street, or what he told his boss when he was consulted about a delicate departmental matter. My questioner's job will then be to find in such a tale an acceptable specification of my friend's honesty... (Heritage 1978: 84-5).

In a recent paper, Hester and Hester (2012) present a case which can be seen as an illustration of Heritage's point. R has produced an unsatisfactory answer to "what did you do in athletics today?" J follows with "what did you do? (1.0) high jump". The authors comment that "Jen's question can be heard to instruct Russell on the kind of answer that he should have provided in response to Harry's earlier story invitation" (576).

At any rate, we see in the radio interview how the category "service," is illuminated by the examples offered. Magicians have taken advantage of a closely related tactic commonly called the "magician's choice." For example, the magician may put two closed paper bags on a table. One of the bags, known to the magician, contains an upward-pointing spike, the other is empty. The magician asks a spectator to choose a bag. If the spectator chooses the empty bag, the magician asks "Do you want to use this bag or get rid of it?" If the spectator says "use," the magician says "Okay, we'll use this one," and crushes the bag with his hand. He then reveals that the other contains the spike, which would have pierced his hand. If the spectator says "Get rid of it," the magician crushes the bag and goes through the same revelation. If the spectator's original choice is of the bag with the spike, the magician asks the same questions. "Use" will cause the magician to get rid of the other bag by crushing it. "Get rid of it," will cause the magician to place it to the side and crush the empty bag. In this trick, the magician's actions specify what was (supposedly) meant by his questions. That this tactic is (frequently) successful, that it remains in the magician's bag of tricks, is testimony to the power of a classified item to define the classifier, or, in this

case, of an instructed action to define an instruction (Amerine and Bilmes 1990 [1984]).

Formatting of examples

IE's examples of service are presented in a distinctive format. The examples follow the naming of the category (service). There are three examples, which is common for lists (Sacks 1974; Jefferson 1990). Each example is introduced by "I can remember...". Thus, claimably cognitive events (remembering) are entered into discourse and are analytically treatable as discursive events (Edwards 1997). Remembering becomes a method of presentation; it provides a rhetorical framing. IE's remembrances are recognizable as examples of "services." "I can remember" portends that one or more examples will follow, because of its sequential relation to "services." Unlike, say, "first of all," "I can remember" does not necessarily presage a series. The first item remembered may be the only one. But it does permit a listing, a piling up of items. Unlike a series beginning with "first of all," "I can remember" does not presage an exhaustive listing. If we consider how the incidents she mentions define the term "service," we recognize that there may be other possible apposite instances or services that she is not mentioning, that is, the services that she mentions do not constitute a full ostensive definition of the term "service," even in the limited sense that she apparently intends. They are merely examples. No "etcetera" is required to show that the list is (possibly) non-exhaustive.

Secondly, not only is this not a full ostensive definition of "service," this is not even a full list of the services that they performed; it is just the ones that she can bring to mind at the moment. The formulation, "I can remember," invokes the work of remembering, the fact that she is doing a search. The second and third occurrences of "I can remember" are preceded by significant delays, which helps to make visible the mental effort expended. So, the list is (possibly) incomplete

both as an ostensive definition of "service" and as a catalog of the services that they actually performed.⁴³

Exclusivity and additivity

In a strict taxonomy, as defined in ethnosemantics (e.g., Kay 1971), the items in a set comprised by an "immediate predecessor" are mutually exclusive. So, in a dog taxonomy, poodle and collie contrast; we may get an exchange such as, "Is that a poodle?" "No, it's a collie." IE's examples, it appears to me are also mutually exclusive, in the sense that they are non-overlapping. However, I would not insist on non-overlap as a condition of inclusion in a taxonomy. It would depend entirely on the examples that were offered. Perhaps more importantly, the examples are additive; by adding further items, we may increase the force of the argument. We stop when we have achieved sufficient force or have exhausted all available instances. We see additivity in McNamara's arguments (in segment 4.1) as well.

Reflexivity

I have discussed thusfar how the examples illuminate the occasioned usage of "service." But it is also the case that "service," by classifying the examples, tells us how to understand them. The first two examples, for instance, might, in another context, be taken as cases of poor parenting or even abuse. So, the relation between classifier and classified is reflexive in the hermeneutic/ethnomethodological sense—each elaborates the other. The examples of X can function as examples of X only by virtue of the fact that they have been preclassified as examples of X. What the examples illustrate (not, e.g.,

⁴³ The "I can remember" formulation (especially the first one—"I can remember a time") seems to place the occurrences in the somewhat distant past. I am not sure of the significance of this aspect. Perhaps she is underlining the fact that the house is no longer in operation. The interview took place in August of 1981. IE was arrested and her business closed down in October, 1980. Or maybe she is suggesting that there are other instances which she cannot bring to mind.

poor parenting or, primarily, parental love, but rather the brothel's service to the community) becomes visible only because of such preclassification. Furthermore, putting the items into the same category is what allows them to be perceived as a coherent list. Although the first two examples might go together in a fairly transparent way, how the third example fit with the other two might not be obvious in the absence of the precategorization as service.

I pointed out in Chapter 3 that street girl₁ was given both an ostensive definition (girls working street, taverns, massage parlors) and an intensional definition (doesn't have a place to live right along with it). These definitions are reflexively related. The intensional definition reveals the coherence of the examples, i.e., the common, crucial property that makes them a set. Knowing the common property might allow for the expansion of the list, if the list is not exhaustive. But, not living where one works is an overly broad definition, since it includes non-prostitutes. Our understanding of the intensional definition, though, is constrained by the list of examples. It is in the interaction between the list of examples and the account of the common feature that the definition of street girl takes its perfected shape.⁴⁴

Concluding remarks

Although it may be evident that a taxonomic representation of person categories is appropriate for this data, it is questionable as to whether anything is gained by diagramming the relationship between service and its examples. I noted that the relationship between “service” and the instances offered as evidence of service, is one of mutual definition—each tells us how to understand the other. But, I suppose, one could

⁴⁴ It is a commonplace observation in ethnomethodology that there is a reflexive relation between accounts, categories, or other linguistic expressions, on the one hand, and context on the other (Garfinkel 1967; Weider 1974; Hester and Eglin 1997b are three among many, many examples). I would also relate my claims about the reflexivity of category and examples to Saussure's (1959 [1916]) structuralist approach to language, according to which the meaning of each item in a language is determined by its relation to other items. The crucial difference, of course, is that I am talking about the relation of items in actual, occasioned talk.

arrive at this insight without the aid of taxonomic representation. My reason for using such representation in this case is not so much to advance our understanding of the data as to advance our understanding of hierarchical structures of inclusion, which, in my usage, are comprised in the term taxonomy. We see that the items categorized need not themselves be sets; individual cases can be represented if they occur in the talk. As a matter of fact, in our interview, the individual case (mother brought son) serves the same function as the other two examples, which are plural sets. And I have suggested that the items included as examples of service need not be mutually exclusive. But their relation is cumulative—each one adds something to what has been established by prior items, increasing relevant information and/or force.

Chapter 5: Application of taxonomic technique to an example from Sacks

In this chapter, I will examine a short exchange that has already been well analyzed and try to show how a taxonomic approach produces additional insight. The conversational segment at hand was first examined by Sacks (1992). Edwards (1997) further developed Sacks' analysis. My analysis in no way negates theirs but it does offer a different, somewhat more elaborate, technical, and less ad hoc approach.

Sacks' and Edwards' analyses of the “story” segment

A man ('B' below) has been instructed to call a social agency because of some marital problems he is having. Sacks provides us with an excerpt from B's discussion with the social worker ('A'). Here is the excerpt, in Sacks original format:

(5.1) (Sacks, 1992: vol. 1, 113)

1. A: Yeah, then what happened?
2. B: Okay, in the meantime she [wife of B] says, “Don't ask the child nothing.” Well, she stepped between me and the child, and I got up to walk out the door. When she stepped between me and the child, I went to move her out of the way. And then about that time her sister had called the police. I don't know how she...what she. . .
3. A: Didn't you smack her one?
4. B: No.
5. A: You're not telling me the story, Mr B.
6. B: Well, you see when you say smack you mean hit.
7. A: Yeah, you shoved her. Is that it?
8. B: Yeah, I shoved her.

Sacks (1992) comments on this excerpt in one of his lectures from Spring, 1965 (pp. 113–118, “The inference-making machine”), and again in lectures in Fall, 1965 (pp.

184–185, “Character appears on cue: Good grounds for an action”), and Spring, 1966 (pp. 411–412, also titled “Character appears on cue: Good grounds for an action”). His major point is that A, not being a party to the events in question, is nevertheless able to see that B is not telling “the story,” and B can recognize A’s grounds for doing so. They are able to do this because both realize that B’s story has not provided an adequate warrant for B’s sister-in-law calling the police. (Sacks also makes some insightful points about the relevance of family.) Edwards (1997:96–98) (also Stokoe and Edwards 2006) makes some further points. He notes that B begins by describing his intention—“to walk out the door.” Thus, what occurred between B and his wife was in the service of this innocent intention. Edwards major interest, however, is in the alternative descriptions of B’s action— “move,” “smack,” “hit,” “shove.” “Move,” as Edwards says, poses a problem of “descriptive adequacy,” that is, it is not clearly a violent action warranting police intervention. Moreover, as Edwards acutely observes, B further suggests a lack of warrant and sequential coherence— “about that time her sister had called the police. I don’t know how she . . . what she.” A provides a stronger warrant for calling the police by proposing “smack.” Edwards accounts for B’s reply, “Well, you see when you say smack you mean hit”, by noting that B is displaying “concern for A’s intentional meanings as problematical.” (This is, I think, a rather weak and vague account of the matter, as I will try to show.) And “shove” is treated as a negotiated compromise, a substitute for “move” which is less violent than “smack” or “hit,” but sufficient to provide a plausible basis for calling the police.

After B describes his action as “move her out of the way,” A suggests that B “smacked her one.” When B denies this, A accuses B of not telling the story. “You’re not telling me the story” says that there is some particular story that you should be telling, but you are not telling it adequately for present purposes. It is not suggesting that what you are telling is not a story, that it lacks some element that would make it a story, but rather that it lacks some crucial element that would make it, relevantly, the story of what actually happened. The reason it is not the story is not necessarily because it is false, but because something has been left out. But something is left out of every story.

“You’re not telling me the story”, therefore, is not an observation about an objective situation. It is a statement of relevancies. What has been left out of the story is, as Sacks suggests, the warrant for the wife’s sister calling the police. Until it contains such a warrant, then, B’s story is not “the story.”⁴⁵

It is to be noted that, in making this crucial observation, Sacks is drawing on his (and the reader’s) cultural knowledge. In fact, the discussion is intelligible to the participants themselves by virtue of this same cultural knowledge. Nowhere in the extract does anyone specifically claim that a warrant for calling the police is missing from the account. “You’re not telling me the story” is an object of analysis for B just as it is for Sacks. Although a naïve reading of the transcript raises the question of what is missing, the answer, for the participants and for Sacks, cannot be found in the talk but only in the cultural context. To be more precise, although shoving turns out to be the missing element, we (and they) would not know why without a knowledge of normal reasons for calling the police.

B’s denial of smacking is followed by A’s accusation of not telling the story. By virtue of the sequence, it is apparent that “smack her one,” if accepted by B, would have been acceptable to A as the missing part of “the story.” Taxonomically, what we have thus far is:

⁴⁵ Note that “You’re not telling me the story” is not a simple assertion—it is a complaint and a demand and it is received as such by B.

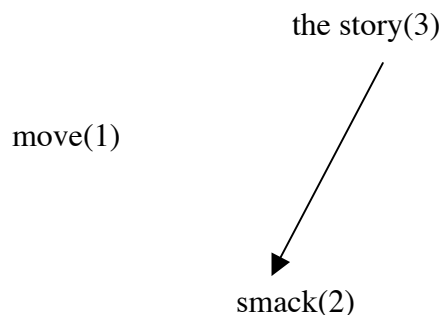


Figure 5.1.

(The numbers in parentheses indicate the order in which the items occur in the conversation. The arrow indicates a “part of” relationship.)

“Smack,” that is, is proposed (by A) as an action that would complete “the story.” In taxonomic terms, “smack” is (potentially) hypoparmonic to “the story.” “Move,” at this point, does not have any defined relationship to “the story,” as conceived by A, in that it does not provide a clear warrant for calling the police. The placement of “You’re not telling me the story” is of some interest. By the end of turn 2, B had already told a story that was not “the story”; A might very well have complained, in turn 3, that B was not telling the story. What is the consequence of first proposing “smack her one”? It would seem that A is offering B an example of the sort of thing that is missing, the sort of thing that would make B’s account “the story.” As such, it aids B in inferring what A might mean by “not telling the story.” But, because of its sequential position, it also creates an ambiguity. Is A (in complaining that B is not telling the story) suggesting that B did in fact smack his wife, or is he claiming that, although B may not have smacked her, his account is incomplete in that he has not yet provided a warrant for calling the police?

This brings us to turn 6, “Well, you see when you say smack you mean hit.” Although Sacks focused on turn 5, I found 6 to be equally interesting and problematic. Neither Sacks nor Edwards has much to say about it. As I have already mentioned, Edwards merely notes that, in turn 6, B is displaying “concern for A’s intentional meanings as problematical.” We need to start by re-examining the preceding sequence:

(5.2)

3. A: Didn't you smack her one?

4. B: No.

5. A: You're not telling me the story, Mr B.

6. B: Well, you see when you say smack you mean hit.

“You're not telling me the story” can be given a narrow or broad interpretation. In the narrow interpretation, it can be paraphrased as “I don't believe your denial; I believe that you smacked her.” B's response in 6 might seem to support this interpretation, since he appears to once again deny that he smacked her. The broad interpretation can be paraphrased as “Maybe you didn't smack her but you must have done something to warrant calling the police. Something important is missing from your account.” I will argue that B's turn 6, although it is a denial, is also, in effect, an invitation for A to guess again.

B formats his response (with “Well, you see. . .”) as an explanation. But what he actually does is more aptly described as a reiteration of his denial. Giving his reiterated denial the appearance of an explanation may make it seem more plausible or reasonable. However, B's phrasing in turn 6 seems rather odd, even within its sequential context. Of course, when A says smack he means hit. What else would he mean?⁴⁶ And, considering the utterance in its sequential environment, how does it respond to “you're not telling me the story”? “I didn't smack her” would be a more straightforward denial.

⁴⁶Consider, by contrast, the following, invented exchange, concerning B's treatment of his daughter:

A: Didn't you discipline her?

B: No.

A: You're not telling me the story, Mr. B.

B: Well, you see when you say discipline you mean hit.

In this exchange, B's denial depends on a particular interpretation, not the only interpretation, of “discipline.” So, B is, in a sense, explaining something, namely, what it is that he is denying. On the other hand, when A says that “smack” means “hit,” he is not negotiating the meaning of either word.

What is accomplished by saying it in the way that he does? It should be noted that “smack means hit” is not to be taken as asserting an absolute equivalence between smacking and hitting. Rather, smacking is one kind of hitting; another is punching, and one can use objects to hit as well.

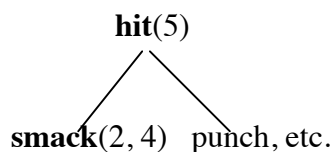


Figure 5.2.

(Items that are actually mentioned in the conversation are in bold.)

So, in speaking as he does in turn 6, B is not simply denying that he smacked his wife; he is also denying that he punched her or hit her in any other manner. Although no one actually mentions punching, it is implicated in a semantic map of the exchange by virtue of being ruled out. Furthermore, if smack is a possible version of the story, and by smack is meant hit, then hit is also a possible version:⁴⁷

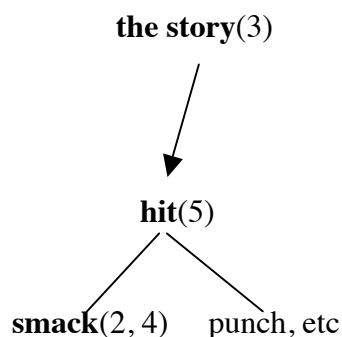


Figure 5.3

⁴⁷ This is not simply because hit is a hypernym of smack. Move is a hypernym of shove, but whereas shove seems to count as telling the story, move does not. When B says, “by smack you mean hit,” he is claiming a kind of functional equivalence. Hit preserves the element of smack that makes it a possible telling of the story, namely, its violence.

The relation of smack to hit is immediately available to us on semantic grounds; if we were given the word smack and asked to create a taxonomy around it, we would, more than likely, make hit or strike its hypernym. On the other hand, the probability of including the story in such a taxonomy is virtually zero outside of a context such as this exchange. Although we require cultural knowledge to appreciate the relationship between smack and the story in this conversation, that relationship is still occasioned rather than being part of some readily available structure of semantic knowledge.

We are dealing here with a (hybrid) taxonomy that is created sequentially, in talk, for the moment. Turn 6, though, does something more, something that seems to recognize the broad interpretation of turn 5. It, in effect, invites A to keep guessing at what B might have done to warrant the call to the police. B generalizes “smack” to “hit.” In doing so, he makes a larger claim than that he did not smack her. But this also raises the question of why his claim was not generalized further. He might have said “I didn’t do anything to her” or “That is the whole story.” If there were no conceivable warrant for his sister-in-law’s call to the police, one might expect a broader denial than the one he actually produces. We evaluate what people say by reference to what they might, relevantly, have said. When someone generalizes, we may ask, why did he generalize just so far and no farther? The very act of generalization invites such speculation. Thus, B’s turn 6 can be heard as an invitation to A to look for some act other than hitting that would warrant the call to the police. He does not deny that there is a warrant for calling the police, just that smacking or hitting is that warrant.

Charles Frake, as I have noted earlier, recognized that taxonomic hierarchies give individual speakers choices in regard to how they might categorize particular phenomena, and that these choices are strategic resources that can be used in conversational environments. When B describes his action as “move her out of the way,” he is speaking at “just the level of generality that specifies the pertinent information but leaves other, possibly embarrassing, information ambiguous” (Frake, 1961:122). In this case, B

has, from A's perspective, left out too much—it is the possibly embarrassing information that is pertinent). But speaking at a higher level of generality does not always decrease the amount of information conveyed. When we say “It is a tree” rather than “It is an elm,” we have decreased the information conveyed; but, when we say “It is not a tree” rather than “It is not an elm,” we have increased the information. So, for the hearer, an affirmative statement may raise the question of why the speaker was not more specific, whereas a negative statement (as in turn 6, which is a denial) may cause one to wonder why he was not less specific. That is, in each case, we may examine his statement with an eye to what he did not tell us. And, when a speaker generalizes or specifies a previous formulation, this sort of examination is more likely to occur, that is, we are more likely to ask “why so far and no farther?”

We can express some of this in terms of “inclusion maxims.”

Inclusion maxim 1: *In order to maximize communicated information, make positive statements in the most specific way possible.*

Inclusion maxim 2: *In order to maximize communicated information, make negative statements and denials in the most general way possible.*

To maximize information, B should express his denial in the most general way that he can. Generalizing smack to hit, as we have noted, increases information conveyed. On the other hand, there would be nothing to be gained in terms of information conveyed if B had said, “By shove, you mean move,” since B is accepting shove as a proper description of his action. That is, in the first case, information is increased by generalizing, because the statement is negative (i.e., a denial). In the second case, information is not increased, because the statement is positive (an acceptance).

When B rejects smack and hit as descriptions of what happened, A suggests shove. Consider the exact wording: “Yeah, you shoved her. Is that it?” The use of “Yeah” and “Is that it?” suggests that A has (provisionally) accepted B's denial of hitting (and all its hyponyms) and that his proposal (shoving) is contrastive to, rather than hyper- or hyponymic to, hitting. Furthermore, “Is that it?” seems to indicate that A recognizes that B has invited a further guess.

Edwards suggests that shove is more acceptable to B because it is less violent than smack or hit. It seems to me that, although a particular shove (e.g., off a cliff) might well be more violent than a particular hit, shove is indeed, in semantic or connotative terms, less violent than hit. So, for instance, if we were to write “shove” on one card, “hit” on another, “poke” on another, and “shoot” on a fourth, and then ask an English-speaking informant to arrange the cards in ascending order of violence, I imagine (and a few actual trials confirm) we would get “poke,” “shove,” “hit,” “shoot.” A’s proposal of shove, then, as an alternative to hit and smack, probably does downgrade the violence. But shove is not merely an alternative description of a particular act—it is a different act than hit. So, something more is going on here than downgrading violence.

Let us consider another of Edwards’ observations, that shove “substitutes” for “move her out of the way.” But shove is not merely a substitute; it is more specific. That is, move comprises shove along with less violent alternatives. Note that A could have made a variety of other guesses (kicked her, threw something at her, verbally abused her, as well as bad behavior directed toward the sister, the child, or physical property, but none of these would have been hyponyms of “moved”). Or, instead of guessing, he might have demanded that B tell him what caused B’s sister-in-law to call the police. In the light of these possibilities, it seems likely that the choice of “shove” was influenced by B’s prior use of “move”

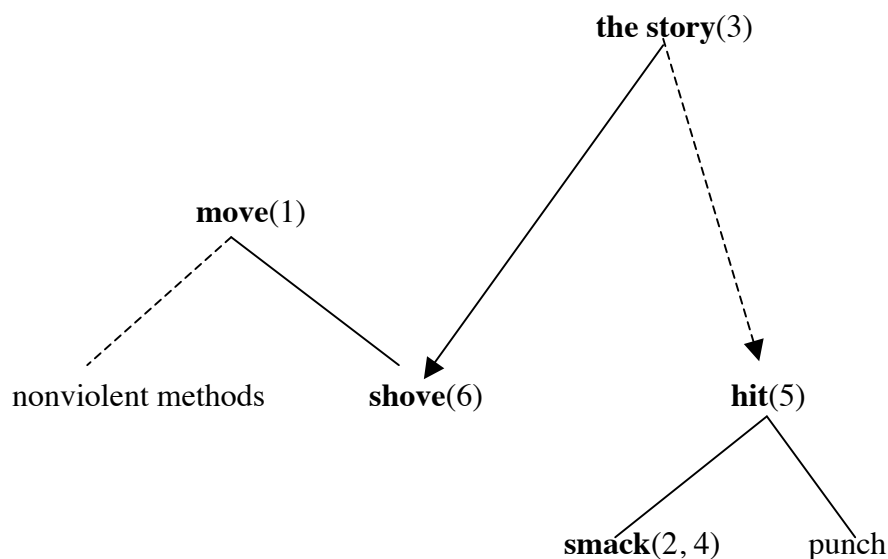


Figure 5.4

(The dashed line indicates that, although “hit” would be a proper part of the story, it is not in fact an actually occurring part. Likewise, although moving someone could be done nonviolently, shoving is what [purportedly] occurred.)

Like smacking and hitting, shoving provides some warrant for calling the police. Unlike hitting and smacking, however, shoving is a subcategory of moving (not merely a substitute). It is therefore consistent with B’s initial account. B may not have been sufficiently specific, but he did, in some technical sense, tell the story, and he did not lie.⁴⁸ Given B’s denial of hitting, shove may have been a product of A’s search for an action more consistent with B’s initial account (as against, say, kicking, verbal abuse, etc.).

If we were aiming at a motivational account of what occurs in this exchange, we would face a problem. Was B seeking to lessen the violence or was he after a description that was consistent with his initial account, or both? For my analytical purposes, this is

⁴⁸We might apply Grice’s (1975) maxim of quantity here: if it is assumed that B has given as much information as is required in using the word “move,” then the (conversational) implicature is that there was no violent act and no warrant for calling the police. However, implicatures can be cancelled; they are not equivalent to assertions or logical implications.

not a problem. I am not interested in what prompted B to accept shove: it is enough that he does accept it. My concern is with what shove does, that is, with its conversational consequences. As a description, it is (seemingly) less violent and it is more in line with B’s original account. My taxonomic analysis, however, deals only with the second of these effects. A fuller analytical approach to formulation would have to deal with intensity scales, a matter which I will take up in Volume 2.

By proposing shove as an alternative to smack, A has brought into play Sacks’ consistency rule corollary: “If two or more categories are used to categorize two or more Members to some population, and these categories can be heard as categories from the same collection, hear them that way” (Sacks, 1992: vol. 1, 247). So, if there is mention of “rat” and “squirrel,” the collection (i.e., hypernym) “rodent” is invoked, whereas “rat” and “cockroach” invokes “vermin.” In this case, the items are “smack,” “hit,” and “shove,” and the collection is “violence.” This creates a new taxonomic level because “the story” is not necessarily one of violence. That is, there are nonviolent acts which might warrant calling the police; for instance, B might have been offering drugs to his son, or stealing from his wife. So, the final version of our taxonomy is as follows:

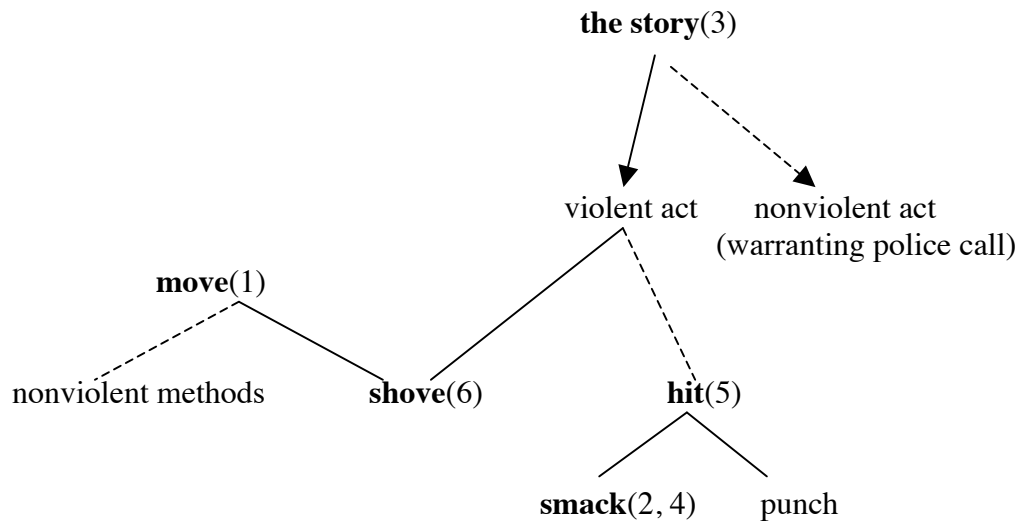


Figure 5.5

Discussion

This, then, is the analysis. What has been accomplished? First, a venerable technique has been adapted to a new purpose. I have applied taxonomic analysis to the study of natural conversation, while respecting the actual participant formulations and their sequential occurrence. In so doing, I have elaborated the taxonomic analysis itself (by distinguishing actually mentioned items from implicated ones and actually occurring ones from potential but non-occurring ones, by indicating sequence of occurrence, and by proposing a hybrid taxonomy). But this is, in itself, of little significance, unless there is some advantage to be gained from such reapplication. The advantages, as I have indicated earlier, are of two sorts. One is that a taxonomical presentation gives us an orderly way of visualizing and dealing with the data. We get a cumulating analysis which is adumbrated in a ramifying diagram. The other advantage is that this form of analysis produces new insights. In the case at hand, at least three insights result directly from a taxonomical treatment: (1) When B reformulates smack as hit, he rules out a range of otherwise plausible alternatives (e.g., punch). (2) When B reformulates smack as hit, he invites further guesses by virtue of his limited generalization. (3) The choice of shove as an alternative is made more likely and more acceptable because it is a hyponym of move, and, therefore, B's initial account was, technically, true. These three insights are especially mentionable because they do not occur in either Sacks' or Edwards' treatments.

Aside from particular analytic insights, the foregoing analysis has certain general implications:

(1) What we are dealing with is a structure of meaning. But it is not A's conceptual structure, or B's, nor is it a combination of the two, nor is it best thought of as a representation of their shared knowledge, even if we take that knowledge to be specifically-for-this-occasion. Rather, the taxonomy represents the emergent structure of meaning of the conversation itself, a semantic skeleton, an abstract set of terminological/conceptual relations as manifested in a culturally contexted discourse. It is a field of meaning, co-constructed in and for the moment.

(2) Although the taxonomy resulting from this analysis suggests a certain quasi-linear order, it was not created in a linear, top-to-bottom or bottom-to-top fashion. Rather, as the numbers in parenthesis (which mark the order in which the concepts were introduced into the conversation) indicate, the taxonomic structure was cobbled together by the participants bit by bit, from every direction. The ultimate coherence of the structure arises from the participants' sensitivity to the parts that were already in place. The taxonomy represents a structure of cumulated propositions and agreements. Although some things occur simultaneously, conversation is essentially sequential—there is a before and an after. Most, but not all, conversational occurrences are influenced by sequential organization (an involuntary cough, for example, although part of a physiological sequence, may not be influenced by the organization of the conversation within which it occurs). A conversational taxonomy, too, is a product of sequential operations. But the structure of concepts represented by the taxonomy is suprasequential. Once the taxonomy is created it is there as a condition of further talk.

(3) Classonomies and partonomies are generally presented as alternative possibilities, but the structure of actual talk or text may require representation as a combination of the two, what I have called a hybrid taxonomy.

(4) Some of the taxonomic relations evident in the exchange are “relations in the language,” i.e., they are conventional. So, smack is a form of hit. (Thus the oddness of “when you say smack you mean hit”—B is pointing out something which they both, as competent speakers of the language, already know.) But there are also “occasioned relations”: the relation of smack to the story is an example. The relation of smack to the story nevertheless depends not only on what is happening in the talk but also on shared cultural knowledge.

Chapter 6: Contrast and hierarchy

Definitional issues

I have already had something to say about contrasts as they appear in taxonomic frameworks. In this chapter, I will focus on contrast as an occasioned semantic relation, and attempt some formal observations, bringing together and adding to what has already been said. We begin with definition: when we speak of contrast, of what precisely are we speaking? What sort of relation is contrastive? Deppermann (2005: 290) mentions that

contrast holds for any two lexical items which can be mapped onto a common semantic dimension and which

- simply exclude one another (incompatibility: monday vs. tuesday);
- inhabit polar positions on a dimensional scale ((polar) antonymy: hot vs. cold);
- divide a common dimension into two sections and negatively imply one another (complementarity: dead vs. alive);
- denote states or processes which are spacially or temporally opposed to one another (perspectival conversion: before vs. after), reciprocal actions or roles in action sequences (e.g., buy vs. sell), or opposing directions and actions (directional conversion: come vs. go; restitutives: gain vs. waste).

A list like this is very useful as an elaboration, but perhaps not what we seek in a definition. How do we know whether two items are in contrast without consulting a list of this sort? Again, Deppermann (2005:291): “Following Barth-Weingarten (2003: 39), ‘contrast is understood here as a general term for all kinds of relations which in some way express an opposition between items of one sort or another.’” Ford (2000), although she begins with what I think is a somewhat inadequate definition from Mann and Thompson (1992), eventually proposes incompatibility as the defining criterion. This is very close to “opposition.” I would suggest that contrast involves some sort of assertion, by explicit

statement or implication, of difference. It is not enough that two items be different; they must be juxtaposed within an actual situation of talk and their difference must be made relevant. (Indeed, the first definition of contrast that I find on Google is “the state of being strikingly different from something else, typically something in juxtaposition or close association.”) As I will discuss later, the items are not necessarily in opposition, in the sense that, if one is true, the other is not. Furthermore, as Deppermann indicates, the items must be located on “a common semantic dimension”; in my preferred terms, there must be a taxonomy of such items wherein the two opposing items are comprised by some higher level item. As I mentioned in Chapter 2, we don’t contrast badgers and basketball games precisely because it is hard to imagine any expression, except for “entity” (or “words beginning with “b”), that categorizes both.

Without a clear and limiting definition, the concept of contrast can become rather loose and mushy. Consider this exchange from Ford (2000):

(6.1) Ford 2000:298

A: She’s trying to decide if sh[e wants to SPEND=

R: [She has a lot of sheep.

A: =thirty five dollars on her dad. For Christmas.

R: Oh.

A: And she really doesn’t.

(0.4)

A: But- (.) the gift that she thought of was thirty five dollars, and she can’t find it anyplace else.

Ford talks about the contrast “between P’s not wanting to spend \$35 but not being able to find the birdfeeder elsewhere for less” (299). But the two facts are not incompatible; in fact, they are both asserted to be true. (There do seem to be some implicit contrasts invoked in this segment—\$35 vs. less than \$35, buy vs. not buy.) It seems that Ford is treating cases of “on the one hand...” vs. “on the other hand...”, where

there is some sort of tension between two states of affairs, as contrasts. It seems to me that, at this point, the concept of contrast becomes so loose as to compromise its analytical function.

A problematic example of a different sort: Deppermann (2005) finds a contrast in “threw but didn’t hit.” But throwing and not-hitting stand in syntagmatic relation. I will confine my notion of contrast to items standing in paradigmatic relation, that is, items comprised by a single, higher level category. Thus, pug and dachshund may be contrasted because they are both included in dog. However, the common category might not be the immediately higher one. Pug and Siamese cat have different immediately superordinate categories (dog and cat), but they can nevertheless be co-categorized as pets or mammals and so are contrastable.

Any two items can be contrasted in talk. It is hard to imagine a context in which a speaker might say, “That’s not a badger, it’s a basketball game,” but if such an utterance did occur, we would be bound to search for a way in which badger and basketball game could be co-categorized. If we could not find such a category, or if the categorization (e.g., both begin with “b”) made no sense in the present context, we would say that the person spoke unintelligibly. So, contrast is an operation performed by the speaker and the recipient.

Deppermann (2005:290) says “the activity of contrasting suggests an interpretation of the contrasted words as local opposites.” Although the notion of local opposites is interesting, contrast does not necessarily involve antonymic relations. “Smack” and “shove” in the Sacks’ excerpt examined in the previous chapter, are not opposites; they are merely different. I would nevertheless say that, in that exchange, “smack” and “shove” are in contrast, in that B is saying, in effect, “I didn’t smack her, I shoved her.”⁴⁹ Of course, just because two terms are different in meaning does not put

⁴⁹ Note that “I didn’t smack her, I shoved her” has a different logic from “It’s not a pug, it’s a dachshund.” “It’s a dachshund” logically implies that it is not a pug (putting aside the possibility of mixed breeds), so, from a purely logical point of view, “It’s not a pug” is redundant. “I shoved her,” on the other hand, does not logically imply that I didn’t smack her.

them in contrast. They must be juxtaposed as assertedly, noticeably different in a particular context. (To be fair, what Deppermann appears to mean is “in opposition,” which may accord with my own definition, depending on how one interprets opposition.)

The discussion of contrast in theoretical semantics involves numerous distinctions and seemingly endless complications (see, e.g., Lyons 1977: 270-295). Once again, though, we can avoid the theoretical morass (although not the definitional one) by focusing on the actual employment of contrast in talk. Deppermann (2005) offers the following case (the original is in German, but I will give only the English translation):

(6.2) Deppermann (2005: 298)

1. Opp: I won't have anyone slandering my children.
2. (-)
3. Pro: You have an insolent girl you know that
4. very well
5. Opp: all children are insolent. (.)
6. I'd rather have an insolent child than a sick child.

Deppermann (2005:299) comments that there is “a preferential contrast between frech [insolent] and krank (sick) with respect to her child. In traditional semantic terms, both predicates would not be regarded as mutually exclusive, but as causally, logically, and semantically unrelated. Consequently, the attribution of one of them to a referent would neither preclude nor project the applicability of the other to the same referent.” The contrast is “locally relevant.” It is not in the language; it is constructed in the talk.

Whereas Deppermann finds the contrast to lie in the fact that insolent and sick are presented as mutually exclusive choices, and I suppose they are indeed presented that way,⁵⁰ I think that all that is necessary to place insolent and sick in contrast is to claim

⁵⁰ However, if insolent and sick are indeed presented as mutually exclusive, there is a certain incoherence here, since Opp says that all children are insolent. That would imply that none are sick.

that they are different. It is not required that they be in opposition in the sense that the choice of one involves the negation of the other. I think that this is in accordance with normal usage. When someone says that sickness is different from insolence, the two terms are being contrasted, even though there is no claim that one cannot be simultaneously sick and insolent.⁵¹

It may prove useful to distinguish between “strong” and “weak” contrasts. Strong contrasts involve mutual exclusion between the contrasted items. Weak contrasts fit my earlier definition of contrast—allusion to difference between things or propositions within actual situations of talk—but do not involve mutual exclusion.

Alternate formulations

Recall the rat taxonomy that I presented in chapter 2.

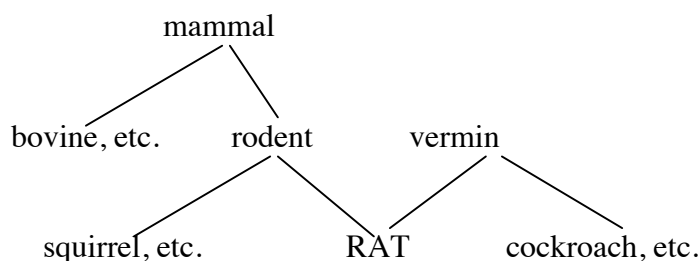


Figure 6.1

⁵¹ Ford (2000) treats negative assertions as invoking implicit contrasts. But, if “He is not a dumb kid” invokes a contrast with “He is a dumb kid,” then is the reverse also true? Does each positive assertion invoke an implicit negation? Of course, this question is complicated by the fact that the negative is the linguistically and semantically marked alternative. So, there is probably a good argument that negative assertions invoke contrast in a way that positive assertions do not. But this is further complicated by context. So, if we say, “In church, people don’t talk,” we seem to be using a negative proposition to invoke an implicit contrast with other situations. But is this not also true for, “In therapy sessions, people talk about intimate issues,” which is a positive assertion that invokes contrast with other situations where people do not talk about intimate issues? Rather than make linguistically based generalizations, it is best to attend to what the utterance does in the occasion of its use.

I want to focus on one part of this taxonomy, indicating two possible classifications of rat.



Figure 6.2

For any occurrence of the word “rat,” there may be some question as to which classification applies—are we, on this occasion, speaking of rats as vermin or as rodents? (Or are we suggesting some other categorization not visualized in this diagram?) Bearing in mind the possibility of alternate classifications, consider the following extract from the Donahue/Posner call-in TV show on CNBC. The subject on this day was sexual harassment. Another party in this conversation was Debbie Brake of the National Women’s Law Center. One call was from a man who described some circumstances relating to a charge of sexual harassment that had been lodged against him. After talking to the caller, the following exchange took place:

(6.3) Donahue-Posner (Oct. 14, 1993) [click image to view video recording](#)

1. Posner: You know there's one point he ((the previous
2. caller)) may be making (.5) and that is that
3. sometimes women will use: .hh this whole
4. issue: .hh (.) an' it- (.) like anyone will there
5. are oppor[tunities] (.) among
6. Donahue: [It is possible to abuse this.
7. P: Right=
8. D: =Sit down on a park bench a woman starts crying
9. rape.
10. P: Well I=



11. D: =I don't think th[at- I think that's very rare
12. P: [Well I'll tell you what
13. (.) I (was in) (.) I was in a bu:s in New York
14. City=I got up to give my seat to a woman (.) who
15. told me: (.) I was a male sexist (.) because I (.)
16. I was taught by my mother that when a woman comes
17. in an' she's got no place to sit down=
18. D: =Yeah
19. P: you: get up as a sign of respect.=
20. D: =She thought [you were being patronizing?=
21. P: [(So you know)
22. P: =and she thought I was [hitting on her or=
23. D: [(you were * izing her)=
24. P: =something. I [don' know
25. D: [No no no she was sa[ying don't treat me
26. Brake: [Let me just bring us back t'
27. r:eality here.

We see here two proposals for classifying Posner's behavior.

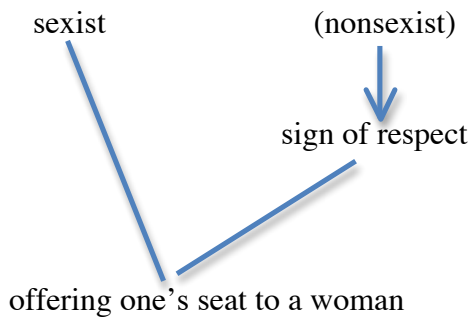


Figure 6.3

This is a perspicuous example of the competing interpretations to which our actions are subject. In this respect, it is different from the alternate classifications for rat mentioned above. Both rodent and vermin are proper classifications for rat, although one or the other may be relevant in a particular situation. So, we would not expect an argument as to whether a rat is a rodent or vermin. The selection between rodent and vermin is contextually determined—that is, they are in something like complimentary distribution. On the other hand, there is an opposition between sexist and nonsexist, such that to be one is not to be the other. Sexist and nonsexist appear in the same context and are in contrastive distribution.

(It is notable that Posner’s characterization of his own behavior as respectful is attributed to a woman; he got this from his mother, not, e.g., his father. So he is not imposing male categories on the interpretation of his action.)

The reader will have noticed that I incorporated in Figure 3 a category, nonsexist, which does not actually appear in the talk. I put it in parenthesis to indicate that it is an implicated category. (I used an arrow to indicate that producing a sign of respect is an attribute of—loosely speaking, a part of—rather than a kind of, being nonsexist.⁵²) My argument is that sign of respect implicates nonsexist, that respectful behavior is a way of being, an enactment of, nonsexist. Giving up one’s seat is, for the woman in the story, an action bound to the category sexist and is in fact diagnostic—if you do it (given,

⁵² I have previously used the arrow to indicate “part of.” I think it is reasonable to consider “attribute of” as a subtype of “part of.”

presumably, certain conditions, such as the woman is relatively young and able-bodied) you are a sexist. On the other hand, for Posner giving up one's seat is a sign of respect, and therefore nonsexist. How do we know this? To begin with, he offers her accusation of sexism as an example of improper use of "this issue" (sexual harassment). He says "sometimes women will use this whole issue," but clearly he means "misuse." So, presumably, the woman's accusation of sexism is an example of such misuse, and his claim that he offered his seat as a sign of respect is to be interpreted as contradicting his accuser. Also, Posner seeks some alternate explanation for her claim—maybe she thought he was hitting on her. If this was her reason for calling him sexist, and if she was wrong and he was merely showing respect, then there is no justification for her accusation. So, sign of respect is a way of indicating that he is not sexist.

At this point, I would like to introduce a distinction between two types of category-bound activities. Type 1: the category implies the activity. So, to use Sacks' most famous example, the category "baby" is bound to the activity "crying," in the sense that all babies cry. If we observe that someone is a baby, we can deduce that that person cries. But, when we observe that someone is crying, we cannot necessarily infer that that person is a baby. Older children and adults sometimes cry as well. Type 2: the activity implies the category, even though the category may not in every, or even in the usual, case be associated with the activity. For the woman in Posner's story, giving up one's seat to a woman (presumably with exceptions for the infirm) is, in every case, sexist. This is not to insist that every sexist will give up his seat to a woman.⁵³ For Posner, showing respect is also, it would seem, type 2. Although it is possible to be disrespectful toward women without being sexist (providing one is also disrespectful toward men), if one is respectful, that almost inevitably indicates that one is not sexist. At least, Posner seems to think so.

Donahue suggests as candidate sexist behavior "being patronizing." Posner seems to ignore that and suggests his own candidates—"hitting on her or something."

⁵³ Another example, more readily tied to common knowledge: Not all women give birth, but, if you give birth, you are a woman.

“Something” here seems to mean “something of that nature,” but it is not clear that this “general extender” involves any actual alternatives (Overstreet, 1999). The “I don’t know” that follows suggests a general mystification as to her motives. So, we have two contrasting alternatives, one offered by Donahue, the other by Posner:

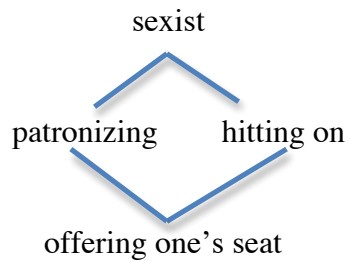


Figure 6.4

“Patronizing” and “hitting on” are contrasting rather than possibly complementary, at least for Donahue. This is indicated by Donahue’s “no no no,” followed by what seems to be an expansion of “patronizing,” in line 25. In conversation, two items contrast when they are treated by participants as contrasting, linguistic or other abstract considerations aside. (Note that Donahue does not interpret Posner’s “or something” as possibly including “patronizing.” He either excludes “or something” from consideration or interprets it as “something like hitting on her.”) These are both interpretations of what the woman thought and so contrast with Posner’s notion of what he was doing. Adding that into our diagram, we get:

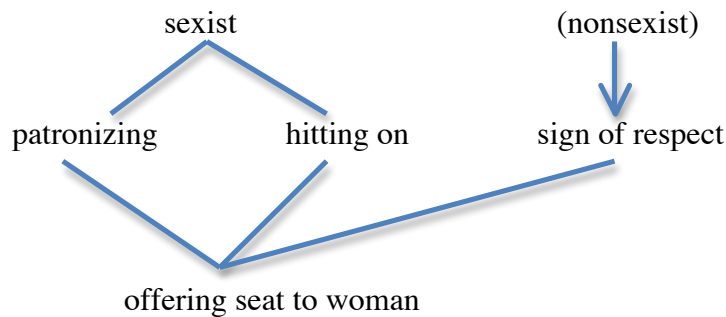


Figure 6.5

Unlike the other taxonomies that we have considered in previous chapters, this one does not represent a settled (i.e., agreed upon) structure of meaning. Rather, it represents three competing interpretations of Posner’s action—Posner’s notion of the woman’s interpretation, Donahue’s notion of the woman’s interpretation, and Posner’s own interpretation of his action. Thus, the diagram represents a complex texture of disagreement, one which is pursued but not resolved in the ensuing talk (see Appendix 1). In general, we are dealing with contested meaning when one hyponym is connected to two or more (purportedly) mutually exclusive hypernyms. No doubt, further investigations will discover other configurations and complexities.

Now, I would like to suggest a “contrast maxim.” We will come back to the Donahue/Posner exchange, but I begin with an extract from a mediation conducted by the Honolulu Justice Center. L, the landlord, and T, the former tenant, have come for mediation of a dispute. After T moved out of the house which he and a roommate had been renting from L, L refused to return any of their deposit. The session began with L, T, and M, a trained mediator, and myself as nonparticipating observer, sitting around a table.

L and T described the situation and their positions to M. Then M had L leave the room, so that she could speak privately to T, after which she spoke privately to L. They then reassembled as a group. M stated that they seemed to be at an impasse, and L and T reiterated their positions. Then L asked T to have his former housemate call her “so that I

can explain” and T replied “Yah (whatever) I can explain it (too)”. M seized on this as an agreement and suggested that they “write it up.”

(6.4) NJC

1. T: Aoh:: that's s'ch a um: a poor: um: y'know uh- 'at's
2. not even worth the time t' write it up y'know I c'n
3. gi|ve ya John's uh: (.5) John's (work) phone number is:=
4. ?: [(*)
5. T: =if you'd like [(*)
6. M: [No- b't- b't George (how I feel)
7. about it is this=
8. T: =I do hav I do have 'n appointmenttuh: y'know I I
9. feel th't uh .hh John Seiden's number at work is
10. ((telephone number)) an:d ah: (.) don' need any
11. signatures on anything.
12. M: Wull (2.5) okay [is is
13. T: [Yeah (.) ('n) I have another meeting
14. too so I- I can' see (*[]) (even spending) around uh=
15. M: [Okay
16. T: =spending the time to write anything down (there).
17. (1.3)
18. M: Okay so: that you'll give Linda the (ud number)
19. c'd- could we- (.) have that number again: jus' so th'
20. I c'n (.) communicate that to (*)?
21. T: ((repeats the telephone number)) (1)
22. M: four two nine six.
23. T: °umhm
24. M: .hh Well (.) (bGeorge) I'd like y' ta- (.8) would

25. you: be willing t' take a minute (.) just to: (.) let
 26. us put that down in writing?
 28. T: No I can't see any reason fr that.=It's (j's a)
 29. phone number it's available y'know: uh: (.4) he works
 30. at Pearl Harbor 'nd uh (.7) so on 'n' so forth (.5)
 31. .hh .hh °y'know° I din' come in here 'n ho- hour 'nd
 32. a half 'r whatever j'st ta j'st t' give a phone
 33. number 'n': 'n'put something down 'n writing (.)
 34. like that [(y'know)=
 35. M: [Okay (.7) wull:
 36. T: =(.) I come in here fr: substantial uh (1.2)
 37. [(reasons)
 38. M: [Okay
 39. M: 'n' I c'n see how- (.) y'know y' could be
 40. disappointed=
 41. T: =resolution yeah

My interest, for present purposes, is in lines 28–41. T is rather specific in saying what he did not come here for. He mentions two items (give a phone number and put something like that in writing) without offering a categorization of those items. One might expect the contrast to be at a similar level of specificity (I came to get my money back). However, the contrast is actually made at a more general level (substantial reasons). The direct contrast to substantial reasons is insubstantial (i.e., trivial) reasons. He has thus, by implication, categorized his original two items. This way of doing it makes a certain amount of sense, given that he begins his turn with “No I can’t see any reason for that”. But then he mentions giving a phone number (which M has brought up earlier as an agreement and, therefore, something which should be recorded) and putting something down in writing (which M later mentions as worthwhile in itself, since it acknowledges them both for attending the mediation). Having first claimed that he could

see no reason to accede to M’s request, and then mentioned two possible reasons, T uses the procedure I have described to more or less negate the two reasons by classifying them as trivial. This analytic outcome (i.e., the implied categorization of the two items as trivial) is, I think, fairly obvious. What is significant here is the mechanism by which the outcome is produced. That mechanism is specified by

Contrast maxim 1: *When item A is contrasted with a more inclusive item B, this suggests a categorization of item A.*

The situation is illustrated in the following diagram:

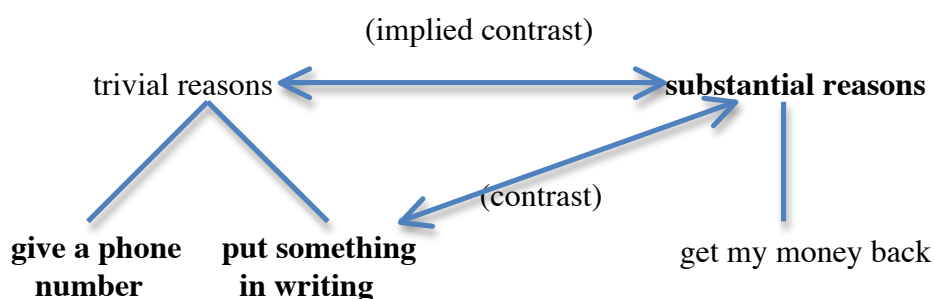


Figure 6.6 (actually occurring items are in **bold**)

Give a phone number and put something in writing are items A. Substantial reasons is item B. The implied contrast here is very strong. It would be difficult to deny that he was classifying give phone number and put in writing as trivial. Since it appears that the implication (that items A are trivial) cannot be canceled, I would not characterize this as implicature. It is closer to entailment. Perhaps it is some third type of inferential process, awaiting a full formal exposition.

The contrast maxim can be applied to the Donahue/Posner segment. Sign of respect (item A) is contrasted with the taxonomically higher-level sexist (item B). This suggests a categorization of A as nonsexist. Furthermore, by contrasting (lower-level) A with (higher-level) B, A is also contrasted with the hyponyms of B. Since hitting on her and patronizing her are ways of being sexist, they are not respectful.

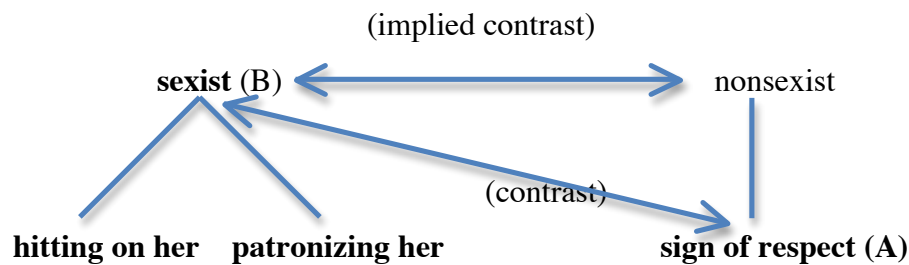


Figure 6.7
(actually occurring items are in **bold**)

Contrast maxim 1 is an application of a more general set of relations. Consider the following segment from the tape recordings that Linda Tripp made of her phone conversations with Monica Lewinsky. They have been discussing Lewinsky's request that Tripp lie in court regarding Lewinsky's relation to the President.

(6.5) Tripp tape 6.1 (4+ minutes into the tape) Click on image to play recording

1. Lewinski: =Right (.) [(*) an' I'm- an' **I** was brought up with lies.=
2. Tripp: [(look)
3. L: =(.) all (.) the time. (.5) So tha- that was how: (.)
4. that was how: you got along -in life -was by lying.
5. T: I don't believe that. Is that true?
6. L: Yes it's true. Y I wanted something from my dad, well
7. first my parents were divorced.=If I wanted money from
8. my dad, I had to make up a story. .hh When my parents
9. were married .hh my mom would –always (.) lying to my
10. dad (.) for everything. (.5) Everything. My mom helped
11. me sneak out of the house (1) I mean that's just how:
12. (.) that's just how I was raised. (2)
13. T: Well (.) [In in the Catholic religion there are white=
14. L: [(*)
15. T: =lie:s and there are black lies.=Those are white lies.



- 16. Those ar- (.) those are like white lies.=Those are kind
- 17. of like lies w-
- 18. L: You look great.
- 19. T: When you really look (.) t.hhh That's .hh that's not
- 20 what I'm talking about here.

The contrast here, in regard to lying, is represented in the following diagram:

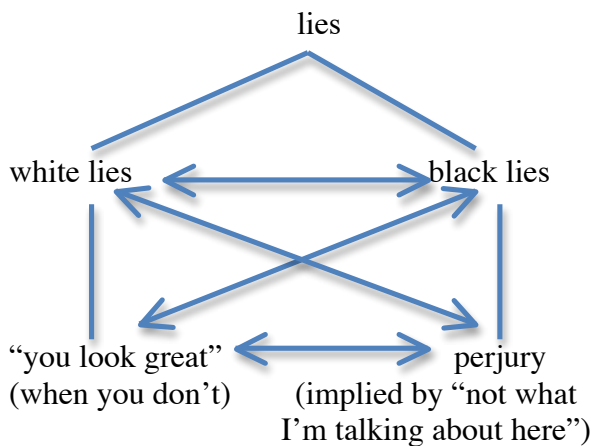


Figure 6.8.
(Plain lines = hypernym/hyponym relation. Double-headed arrows = contrast.)

White lies are contrasted with black. Moreover, each has a hyponym⁵⁴ and the hyponyms also contrast. This is made explicit in Tripp’s “not what I’m talking about here.” This structure, it would seem, implies further contrast between white lies and perjury and black lies and “you look great.” In general, when two categories are contrasted, one or more hyponyms of each may be contrasted as well.⁵⁵ There is an

⁵⁴ It is an interesting feature of this exchange that the hyponym of white lie is co-constructed.

⁵⁵ Note, though, that not all the hyponyms of the contrasting categories are necessarily in contrast, even potentially. It is possible for rodent and vermin to be set in contrast. (A: We should kill all rodents. B: Rodents are different from vermin.) But rodent and vermin share some hyponyms (e.g., rat), so not all their hyponyms are or can be in contrast. However, in the case of what I have called “strong contrast” (characterized by mutual exclusion) between two terms, their hyponyms would also contrast.

implied contrast, an invokable contrast, between all the (nonshared) hyponyms of each category. When hyponyms belonging to different categories are contrasted, this may suggest a contrast between their respective hypernyms.⁵⁶ Or an item may be put into contrast with a higher level category, suggesting, as in contrast maxim 1, a classification of that item.

Of course, it is essential to recognize that some of these contrasts may be realized in a conversation (in the case of segment 6.5, the contrasts between white lie and black lie and between “you look great” and perjury), whereas others (e.g., “you look great” and black lie) are merely implied (or potential) and made available for participants’ use.

Similar considerations apply to paronymies. Here is an extract from a 2000 U.S. presidential debate between Al Gore and George W. Bush:

(6.6) Bush-Gore, 2000, on abortion. Click on image to play recording



1. G: Both of us use similar language to reach ay (.) a an exactly opposite outcome. (.8)
2. uh: (.3) I don't favor a litmus test but I know that uh there are ways to assess ho:w
3. a potential justice (.7) interprets the Constitution an' in my view: (.5) the
4. Constitution – ought to be in (.) interpreted i- (.) uh as a document that grows with
5. th- (.3) uh w:ith with our couuntry and our history. (.7) uh and (.4) I I belie:ve for
6. example that there is ey right of privacy in the fourth amendment (.5) and when
7. the phra:se(s) strict constructionist (.4) is u:sed and when the names of Scalia and
8. Thomas are used as (.4) benchmarks for who would be appointed (.7) those'r (.)
9. those'r codewor:ds (.) and nobody should mistake this (.3) for saying that uh (.3)
10. the governer would appoi:nt people who would overturn (.) Roe vee Wade. I
11. [mean it's just i- it's very clear to me (.) an' I- (.)=

⁵⁶ The contrast between hyponyms does not always translate to higher levels, even when the hyponyms belong to different categories. One can make a contrast between bull terriers and Afghan hounds without implying a corresponding contrast between terriers and hounds in general. The way in which they contrast may have nothing to do with their classification as hounds or terriers. However, the contrast may suggest a more relevant set of hypernyms, e.g., long vs. short hair. So, we need to think of contrasts as possibly invoking or creating categories.

- 12. B: [(*)
- 13. G: =I would appoint people (.) who have a philosophy that I think would (make *)
- 14. quite likely that they would uphold Roe v. Wade.

The contrast structure presented in this extract is represented in Figure 6.9:

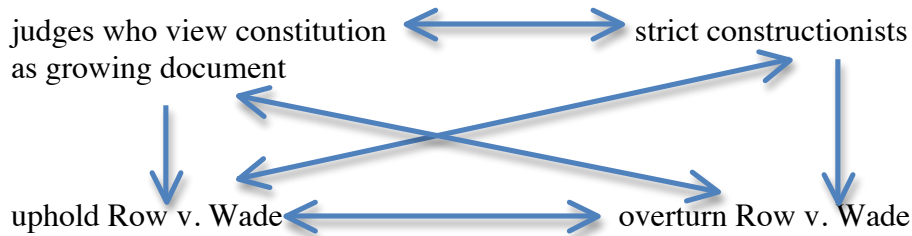


Figure 6.9

(Double-headed arrows = contrast. Single-headed arrows = part of/attribute of.)

This is a partonomy in that, for example, overturning Roe v. Wade is part of, category-bound to, strict constructionism. Once again, we find that the hyperpartons contrast with each other, the hypopartons contrast with each other, and there is a relation of contrast between each hypoparton and the category of which it is not a part. That is, I suppose that one could say, if one subscribed to Gore’s definitions, “He’s not a strict constructionist; he wants to uphold Roe v. Wade.”

There is a second contrast maxim, which was noted in Chapter 3, with respect to IE’s change from bar girl to street girl:

Contrast maxim 2: *When a term, X_i , in the hierarchical array X_{1-n} , is to be contrasted with some term, Y_i , in the hierarchical array Y_{1-n} , the most general form of X and Y that maintains the contrast will maximize communicated semantic information.*

So, for instance, instead of saying that there is a difference between poodles and Siamese cats, we would, if we want to maximize semantic information, say that there is a difference between dogs and cats. We would not, however, generalize cat or dog to mammal, because at that level the contrast would be lost.

In this chapter, I have been examining some aspects of contrastive relationships. The same sort of treatment might be applied to “assimilative” (opposite of contrastive) relations, i.e., co-categorization or claims of similarity or identity. In fact, Sacks does this to some extent, for example, with his consistency rule and its corollary. As I mentioned earlier, contrast and co-categorization are opposite sides of the same coin. Another sort of assimilative operation produces metaphor, which, as I have suggested elsewhere (Bilmes 2009b) is subject to taxonomic interpretation.

I realize that what I have done in this chapter bears some resemblance to ethnosemantic and linguistic pragmatic analysis, as well as to Sacks’ early—and, to some (e.g., Hester and Eglin 1997; Livingston 1987:77; Watson 2015), objectionable—work on membership categorization. I would therefore like to close by emphasizing that:

1. My more abstract points arise from the attempt to analyze actual talk and are meant to be applied in analysis of actual talk. Moreover, since they are generalizations, their validity is unendingly contingent on other analyses of other data.
2. I treat contrast as something which occurs in interactions and is locally created by conversationalists. What the participants are actually doing takes precedence over cultural or linguistic considerations.
3. The contrast maxims that I propose are ethnomethods—they are practices through which members achieve the order and intelligibility of social life.

Chapter 7: Formulation structure in ethnographic context

Context

I am, by training and inclination, an anthropologist. Part of my interest in CA is as a tool of ethnography. Although it might seem that the practice of ethnography has much to gain from the close analysis of interactional data, CA has not caught on to any great extent with anthropologists, and, in fact, the standard practice in sequential analysis has been to avoid, in so far as possible, ethnographic description and invocation of outside-the-interaction context. The “standard” SA practice is best presented in Schegloff (1991). Although he does not rule out appeals to context, he suggests strict limits. His recommendations are for practitioners of CA, but he suggests that his proposed constraints on the invocation of context might represent a “fresh turning” in more ethnographic enterprises. In the subsequent discussions in CA, one senses a greater openness to consideration of contextual matters. Still, the mention of context is kept to what is deemed a necessary minimum, where necessity is defined by the need to understand the organization of the talk under analysis.

Ethnographers, of course, do not operate under such strictures. But why have they, by and large, not found CA to be a useful tool in conducting ethnography? CA studies the systemics of interaction. Interactional organization, e.g., turn-taking and repair, tends to be very similar across cultures, although there is some limited room for variation. On the other hand, cultural difference is pretty much the reason for the existence of the discipline of anthropology and its central interest. This interest is, it seems, advanced to only a very limited extent by the study of sequential organization in conversation, which is perhaps not of great use in explaining Etoro sexual practices, Iroquois residence patterns, Thai religious syncretism, and so forth. I think, however, that a focus on categorization and formulation in general leaves much more room for cultural variation and is, therefore, of greater potential use to ethnographers. Nevertheless, there is much to be said for Schegloff’s disciplined approach to context. Although a general, at length, consideration this matter is relevant to my purposes in this

monograph, and especially in this chapter, it would interrupt the development of my major theme, the architecture of meaning in talk. I have therefore put into Appendix 3 my thoughts on the general issues involved in considering the relation between CA and ethnography. The case is made in a more concrete way in the study which is the subject of this chapter.

The intelligibility and effectiveness of a formulation is determined by several aspects of its design. We may ask how it functions in relation to

the topic,

the argument (logical design and consistency),

the “discursive environment,”

the particular recipient and the local situation,

the sequential context,

the normative environment,

interpersonal perceptions and consequences, such as self-enhancement (as evidenced in the talk).

In what follows, I will deal with the (re)formulation of a proposition. My focus is on a bit of conversational data. Ethnographic considerations, particularly as regards what I term “discursive environment,” are crucial to the analysis.

Ethnographic Background

The subject of this essay is a discussion of a footnote in a Federal Trade Commission (FTC) draft memo. In the footnote, it is mentioned that Regulation B, governing the application of the Equal Credit Opportunity Act, specifies that loan companies are required to inform female loan applicants that they do not have to mention income from alimony or child support in their loan applications. It is then suggested that, although the company under investigation violated this requirement, no enforcement action be taken. The reason given is that informing applicants that they need not give such information may discourage them from giving it, which might result in their not qualifying for the loan. In the discussion, this argument is reformulated, and generalized,

as “We’re not enforcing this portion of Reg B because we think it’s bad public policy.” It is this reformulation, and particularly the phrase “bad public policy,” which is the topic of the analysis that follows.

The central analytic problem is this: Given that “we think it’s bad public policy” is a reformulation of the reason for nonenforcement offered in the footnote, and given that it is a generalization of that reason (that is, it includes the original reason but is broader, less specific), what is the functional significance of generalizing in this case, and why generalize in that way and to that degree? This is a particular instance of the larger question of formulation: What is the significance of speaking of a matter in a certain way rather than in some other way?

The analysis will depend ultimately and crucially on an understanding of the discursive situation in the FTC, particularly as regards a controversy that engulfed the organization at the time of my research. (The tensions that I describe have probably always existed, at some degree of intensity, in the FTC and other regulatory organizations, in the U.S. and elsewhere.) The basic mission of the FTC is to prevent anticompetitive practices and “unfair and deceptive acts.” I studied the Division of Credit Practices in the FTC for eight months in all, three in 1977 and five in 1982.⁵⁷ During that time, I read documents, interviewed Division attorneys and FTC officials at higher levels, attended and recorded internal Division meetings and meetings with other parties, and participated in the informal life of the Division. I developed, I think, a fairly strong and accurate sense of the Division attorneys’ methods, ideas, and concerns, at least in regard to their work, and particularly in regard to the way they talked.

The discussion examined in this report took place in 1982. When Ronald Reagan became president in 1981, he appointed James C. Miller III, an economist, as Chair of the Federal Trade Commission. Miller believed strongly in the virtues of the marketplace (“we can count on self-interested decisions to make the best of whatever institutional framework the law provides...” [1982: 2]). He believed that American business was

⁵⁷ In 1977, it was called the Division of Special Statutes.

overregulated and that the Federal Trade Commission had been overactive and overfunded. Miller appointed like-minded persons to the important administrative positions in the FTC. In particular, he appointed Timothy Muris as Director of the Bureau of Consumer Protection. The new administration instituted various changes in the way the FTC did its business (see Bilmes 1985; Bilmes and Woodbury 1991). The major innovation of interest here is the increased emphasis on economic criteria, both in deciding whether to enforce the law⁵⁸ and in deciding, in cases of enforcement, what penalties to require.

Muris (1981: 312) characterized the (pre-Miller) FTC as “lawless” due to a lack of “meaningful court review.” He advocated bringing the agency under “the appropriate rule of law: the welfare of consumers.” Furthermore, “to determine whether a particular action benefits consumers, economic analysis is appropriate and accordingly should be the touchstone for legality under the FTC Act” (310). The FTC should “not base its judgments on noneconomic criteria (such as distributional effects) that would complicate cost/benefit analysis. The focus will be only on the economic welfare of consumers as a group” (311). Robert D. Tollison, the Director of the Bureau of Economics under Miller, expressed the same view. When asked in an interview if social values, such as protection of small business, might not be considered as part of an enforcement policy, even at the sacrifice of maximum efficiency, he replied, “I didn’t get a key to the room where they hand out values” (Bureau of National Affairs, Inc. 1982:c-10). This sort of rhetoric gave the staff ample grounds for suspicion that the administration would obstruct their attempts to enforce laws that impeded free operation of “market mechanisms.”

The Miller administration believed that the FTC had overextended its mandate to regulate, and called on the agency to enforce the law and nothing more. The FTC’s generally more activist staff and holdover Commissioners, responded by calling on the administration to enforce the law and nothing less. Many of the staff attorneys and some of the Commissioners perceived the new policies as obstructionist, serving the

⁵⁸A “decision not to enforce the law” can take the indirect form of deciding not to look for, and therefore not to discover, certain types of violations.

administration's general distaste for regulation. The demands for increased economic analysis slowed the progress of cases through the system, and had the potential to abort some cases entirely. The staff also tended to view as obstructive the administration's occasional insistence that the words of the law not be taken at face value, requiring the staff to examine Congressional deliberations in an attempt to ascertain legislative intent. Moreover, many did not agree that the purpose of the laws administered by the FTC was purely economic. Commissioner Patricia Bailey, in connection with the Equal Credit Opportunity Act, put it this way: "When Congress assigned ECOA enforcement to the FTC, it did not intend for us to revisit these issues and reexamine in each case the need for the legal requirements it had decided to adopt" (1982). Michael Pertschuk, a Commissioner and former Chairman of the FTC, also saw these policies as obstructionist. He accused the administration of "flouting the law" (1984: 1), and wrote that "the enforcement staff continues to face persistent and demoralizing opposition from economists who insist on evidence of 'consumer injury' in even the most clear-cut cases of credit law violations" (1984:147). He asserted that "a democratic society may give more weight to other shared values than to economic efficiency" (1982:140).

The attitudes expressed by Bailey and Pertschuk were reflected in an expression occasionally used by staff attorneys when they were confronted with the demand for economic justification for a case they were putting forward--"It is our job to enforce the law." For example, one staff attorney said, "They [administration appointees] are economists and they're looking at how society ought to be set up and even the [administration] lawyers are really economists ... and we're thinking more in terms of enforcement uh that we have to- we have to enforce the law." Another commented that the people in the Bureau of Economics don't like the law and seemed to hold the lawyers responsible for it. "Why blame us? We were hired to enforce the law."⁵⁹

⁵⁹ The staff may have had other, more personal reasons for opposing the administration. The administration's stance threatened to decrease the staff's productivity (in terms of cases brought to completion) and to limit their creativity (in terms of interpretation of the law). This, in turn, had possible negative implications both in terms of the interest of their work and career advancement.

It must be noted that this rhetorical stance was a vast oversimplification of the staff's actual position, as is demonstrated in this edited extract from an interview I conducted with Judy, one of the attorneys who composed the memo we will be examining. We are discussing footnote 21. In this footnote, it was proposed that no enforcement action be taken in regard to the company's failure to inform female applicants that they need not report income from alimony and child support payments.

I: ...Here's the Congress and they write a law and they say this is the law and you're supposed to obey it and then the administrative agency says we're going to look at whether to enforce the law on the basis of consumer injury. Is it understood that Congress' intention in writing this law is that the people who enforce it are to make that sort of judgment?

J: I guess in terms of an agency like the Federal Trade Commission we have jurisdiction over many more creditors than we could ever possibly pursue cases against so something like prosecutorial discretion gets exercised in terms of what type of violation we pursue and what companies we pursue violations against. The agency is to bring cases that are in the public interest, which has been translated to mean...what is the seriousness of this, what is the harm? Is there consumer injury, is there a deliberate flouting of the law? What are the public purposes to be served by pursuing this particular violation? If we had the resources to pursue every violation of the act that came to our attention, I guess those decisions would be made differently.

I: But this [referring to the matter dealt with in footnote 21] is a case where it wouldn't require any particular effort. The paragraph that you took to explain why you're not enjoining them from doing it could be the paragraph in which you were enjoining them from doing it. It would seem that in certain cases Congress might pass a law and then the FTC might decide that the law isn't needed or that it isn't sensible or constructive, which seems to be the

judgment here, that it actually might do some harm, and simply in effect administratively veto the law.

J: I guess that's accurate, yeah. It's not enough to show that there is a violation but there also has to be a showing that someone is harmed by that or that there is some failure in the marketplace that is causing this to occur, some public policy that makes this violation worth pursuing, and in the absence of that showing it's our experience that the Commission would probably not issue a complaint on what they would consider to be a technical violation.

Given the unavoidable fact of selective enforcement, as well as the occasional not-so-unavoidable decision to let violations pass, based on staff judgment rather than limited resources, why did the staff take the oversimplified rhetorical stance that "It is our job to enforce the law?" First, it should be noted that the administration's position, if carried to its logical conclusion, might have resulted in total nonenforcement of the ECOA. The ECOA was designed, in large part, to prevent discrimination based on race, gender, or age. Director Muris had adopted Gary Becker's (1957) position that if an action is taken for a valid economic reason, it cannot be considered discrimination. Discrimination is the result of a "taste for discrimination," and is costly. Therefore, the market itself will weed out companies that discriminate, and there is no need for government regulation. Muris remarked to me that the ECOA is designed to punish discriminators, and "I'm not sure we're better at doing that than the market."

Nevertheless, the administration did not, in fact, take the position that the FTC should never enforce the ECOA, nor, as the interview extract above (as well as the footnote itself) indicates, did the staff hold the position that violations of the ECOA should always be enforced. The real disagreement was about what criteria should be used in making enforcement decisions. The administration favored purely economic criteria (using a particular economic approach), whereas the staff, by and large, wanted to include considerations of what they saw as social justice and to put less stress on economic criteria and economic analysis. Since the administration had the power to

impose its views, it made sense for the staff members to invoke higher powers—the law and the will of Congress—and to take, in their rhetoric, an uncompromising “enforce the law” position.

The staff’s claim, then, that “it is our job to enforce the law” was a rhetorical position, an effort to countervail the power of the administration by allying themselves with the supreme institutions of government. It was their “official” position vis-à-vis the administration, but it was not necessarily the stance that they maintained when dealing with one another within the Division.

This brief account of the tensions within the FTC between the administration and the staff will suffice for present purposes.

The discussion of footnote 21

The transcript that appears in Appendix 4 is a segment of a discussion among staff attorneys in the Division of Credit Practices of the Federal Trade Commission regarding a memo which is to be sent up from the Division to the Office of the Director of the Bureau of Consumer Protection (“the Bureau,” as the staff commonly called it). The memo describes XYZ Loan Company’s purported violations of the Equal Credit Opportunity Act (ECOA), and recommends certain actions on the part of the FTC. More precisely, the violations were of Regulation B, issued by the Federal Reserve Board. Regulation B is a set of provisions specifying the application of the ECOA. Before the Division can proceed with the case, it must get Bureau approval. The function of the memo was to obtain that approval.

The memo was written by two staff attorneys, Judy and Mary, with the guidance of Paula, their immediate superior. Paula was program advisor for ECOA enforcement, which was her primary area of responsibility. One step up from Paula in the division hierarchy is Ben, one of two assistant directors of the Division. The meeting begins with Ben giving his detailed reactions to the memo to Paula, Judy, and Mary. This part of the meeting lasts 43 minutes. Then Helen, the director of the Division enters, and the discussion proceeds. After another 80 minutes, Helen leaves and the final part of the

meeting, in which Ben continues his review, once again involves Ben, Paula, Judy, and Mary. The segment under consideration occurs within this final part of the meeting and consists of a discussion of one passage, a footnote in the memo. The footnote contains two paragraphs. It is the second paragraph that Ben finds problematic.

The audits also revealed that XYZ employees routinely do not give the disclosure that alimony, child support or separate maintenance income need not be revealed if the applicant does not wish to rely on it to qualify for the credit requested, which disclosure is required by §202.5(d)(2) of Regulation B. Staff is concerned, however, that in most cases when applicants receive such income, consideration of that income would be necessary in order for the creditor to grant the credit requested, and that this disclosure may serve to discourage applicants from revealing alimony, child support or separate maintenance payments. Staff has brought these violations to the attention of XYZ, and does not recommend that further action be taken.

The discussion of the footnote (see Appendix 4) falls neatly into two sections: the first section occurs with Paula out of the room (lines 1-38), the second begins as she re-enters the room (lines 39-82). This division is based not only on the change in participation framework, but also on the fact that, when Paula re-enters, the topic is reinitialized. Each section begins by establishing that Ben has a problem with footnote 21. This, in turn, sets the scene for his argument, that is, his explanation of why he finds the footnote problematic. The second section begins as follows:

(7.1) 10/7 XYZ Loan Company

((‘B’ = Ben, ‘P’ = Paula, ‘M’ = Mary, ‘J’ = Judy))

39. ((Paula re-enters))

40. P: Did I hear my name?

41. B: ha ha

42. M: huh[huh huh

43. J: [Yeah (.) footnote twenty one: Ben wants to know

44. if you really want this in here and we said huhnhh

45. P?: What's this. (1)

46. B: Carol Riley footnote? (.8)

47. M: hhhuhhuh (1)

48. P: °here° (2) the footnote on why we're not suing 'em

49. for (.5)

50. J: for fail- for failing [to give the alimo- (.)=

51. P: [for giving the notice

52. J: =the notice

53. B: We're not enforcing this portion of Reg B because

54. we think it's bad public policy. (3.5)

55. P: Wellhhh (1)

56. B: Pau::la:, (1)

57. M: Shall we take it out? (1) and just not (.) address

58. the [issue

59. B: [If Ted didn't enforce everything he thought

60. was bad p(h)ublic p(h)olicy whe(h)re w(h)ould

61. (h)you b(h)e (1.5)

62. P: I was a little (.) I was concerned about that and

63. noted it (.) on line (1) because i- the way it ends

64. up reading is: (.) if they corrected it voluntarily

65. (.) there's no need to do anything about it now

66. which is the way Ted would like to handle

67. everything.

68. B: The way it (.) reads is this's bad public policy.

69. (.) ‘s no reason to do it

It is evident that Ben is addressing Paula, whom he takes to be responsible for the footnote. Throughout the discussion, both before and after Paula enters the room, Ben, Mary, and Judy speak as though Paula was responsible for footnote 21. Judy and Mary did the actual writing of the memo, but the various drafts were subject to a close review by their immediate supervisor, Paula. This fact in itself might warrant treating Paula as the responsible party. It is notable, though, that Mary and Judy, the authors of the memo, never try to defend the footnote, except with explanations attributed to Paula (see Appendix 4). This seemed strange to me until I ran across Judy’s handwritten notes of a meeting with Paula four months previously, dealing with an earlier version of the XYZ memo:

Failure to give income disclosure

Do not include, fn to explain why

Most people who get alimony/child support rely on it

“Failure to give income disclosure” refers to the violation which they eventually wrote up as footnote 21, second paragraph. “Do not include” apparently means “do not include as a charge in the case.” But, if there is a violation and no enforcement action recommended, they should explain why, in a footnote; the explanation being that most women who get alimony or child support will need to inform the loan company of that fact in order to qualify for the loan. It was, then, Paula who asked for the footnote and supplied the rationale, although the actual writing was left to Judy and Mary. (When Paula finally deals with Ben’s argument, in lines 62-7, she acknowledges that the footnote is problematic but formulates the problem somewhat differently than Ben. Also, she seems to shift the blame to Judy and Mary by faulting “the way it ends up reading,” thus making an implicit distinction between the core ideas of the footnote and the way in which Judy and Mary expressed those ideas.)

In line 59, Ben mentions Ted. Ted is the head of the Division of Evaluation. When the Division of Credit Practices writes a memo to the Bureau proposing action on a case, the memo is passed through the Division of Evaluation, which adds its recommendations. Ted was a thoroughgoing libertarian, and in principle against regulation of the market. What makes Ted especially significant for Ben's argument is not only that he was at the next level of review, the first level of the administration with which the Division of Credit Practices has to deal. It is also that he was more or less representative of administration policy, although his views may have been a bit more extreme than most. Neither the Division of Evaluation nor the Division of Credit Practices actually had the power to enforce or not enforce the rules; both acted in an advisory capacity to the Office of the Director of the Bureau of Consumer Protection, and, ultimately, through that Office, to the Commission and the courts.

Reformulating the footnote

Although a full sequential analysis of this segment would be digressive, I will, in this paragraph, make some observations that I think result from such an analysis. Paula is immediately able to identify the problematic section of footnote 21, suggesting that she already has some idea of the nature of Ben's objection. Ben then offers, in lines 53-4, a reformulation of the problematic paragraph. Although this reformulation serves as a premise for his argument in lines 59-61, his presentation, and his hearers' responses suggest that the argument is projectable from the premise. Thus, lines 53-4 are both an attribution and a challenge. When Paula has difficulty responding, Mary, in lines 57-8, tries to cut through the argument by proposing that they drop any reference to the matter. This interferes both with the participation structure proposed by Ben (in that he is addressing Paula) and with the argument that he is seeking to present (in that there has been no acknowledgment that he is correct). Ben responds by overlapping her utterance to present his explicit argument. Although no one had, as yet, explicitly accepted the correctness of his reformulation/premise, the lack of opposition can be taken as implicit

acceptance (see (Bilmes 1993, 1995a, b on “first priority response”), allowing him to proceed to his main argument.

Although it may be intuitively clear that lines 53-4 serve as a premise for the argument in lines 59-61, the analyst is left with a question: How does Ben get from the very specific “this portion of Reg B” to “everything [Ted] thought was bad public policy”? How can the proposed rejection of a minor regulation have such broad implications? To give a reason for acting (or not acting) is to propose a general rule. When we say that we will not enforce this regulation because it is bad public policy, we are in effect saying that any regulation that is bad public policy should, other things being equal, not be enforced. So, Ben is claiming that the memo is proposing a certain rule and it would be disastrous if Ted were to adopt the same rule. And this, in turn, is given force by a notion of normative consistency: if it is legitimate for us to act under a certain rule, then it is legitimate for others to do so as well. Furthermore, the very point of the staff’s enforce-the-law rhetoric is to deny the legitimacy of such a rule. (Thus, Ben’s observation [Appendix 4, lines 24-5] that, if the administration made such an argument, we would “scream and yell.”)

Although “everything that [Ted] thought was bad public policy” is broader than “this portion of Reg B,” the one is not a generalization of the other, at least not in the sense in which I am using the term. The former is not a reformulation of the latter, nor does it necessarily subsume the latter (that is, “this portion of Reg B” might not be one of the things that Ted thinks is bad public policy). Instead, “everything that [Ted] thought was bad public policy” is arrived at through a process of logical or quasi-logical implication. In contrast, “we think it is bad public policy” is a generalization of the reason offered in the footnote. (The notice requirement may have the effect of preventing qualified applicants from obtaining loans. Moreover, this ill effect will fall especially on women and so is discriminatory. Therefore, it is [one case of] bad public policy.) Ben does not fault the footnote on the basis that it is factually or logically flawed. Instead, he reformulates the reason for nonenforcement, generalizing to “bad public policy” and bases his opposition on this generalization. The argument presented in the footnote may

not be wrong, but it is unwise.⁶⁰ The significance (to Ben, at least) of the formulation “bad public policy” is indicated not only by the emphasis on the words but also by the fact that Ben repeats it twice more in the turns that follow.

In generalizing a category, two matters must be considered. First, what taxonomy? Shall we generalize “rat” as “rodent-mammal,” on the one hand, or, on the other, as “vermin”? Second, what level in the taxonomic hierarchy? Shall we generalize “rat” as “rodent” or “mammal”?⁶¹ In what follows, I will speak of these matters as the directionality and level of generalization. The different choices, as will be seen, are strategic; they have different conversational consequences, and so we must look to the conversational context. For example, as I have discussed earlier, Frake (1961) made the observation that, rather than being as specific as possible, one might choose a more general category to elide certain embarrassing information. We shall see that various other contextual factors may affect the level and directionality of generalization.

The statement in the footnote as to the consequences of §202.5(d)(2) could be generalized in a different direction as, say, good public policy, since it protects women’s privacy and offers them choices. Or, it could be subsumed under “ways of decreasing the total amount of debt in the U.S.” One way of fixing directionality, as we have seen, is

⁶⁰ Ben makes what I will call a type II objection to the argument put forward in the footnote. A type I objection would be a refutation—you are wrong, your logic is faulty or your empirical claims false. Ben does not fault the footnote on this basis. Instead, he questions the wisdom of making this argument—a type II objection. I take the trouble of distinguishing types here in order to raise a question: when both types of objection are available and equally plausible, which takes precedence? I would propose (at this point, based purely on intuition) that type I objections take precedence. That is, the “rule” is, if both types are available, choose type I. Type II may be added later, if there is conversational space. It follows that, if one opposes an argument with a type II objection rather than a type I, there is an implication that type I is not available to the speaker, or at least not very plausible.

⁶¹According to Berlin (1992; see also Rosch 1977, 1978), generic taxa, such as “rat” are most salient to native speakers, the default choice. But, of course, sometimes we choose to use higher or lower levels of taxonomic classification. Moreover, Berlin’s claim seems to apply only to a certain set of culturally routinized taxonomies. It is not at all clear that his claim has any application to the choice of “bad public policy” versus more specific or general formulations.

through co-categorization. When rat is mentioned together with cockroach, we know that we are talking about vermin, not rodents. The present case reveals another resource for determining directionality. In the context of the footnote, the directionality is determined by the fact that the consequence described (“this disclosure may serve to discourage applicants from revealing alimony, child support or separate maintenance payments”) is given as a reason for not enforcing the regulation. Any further generalization must likewise serve as a reason for nonenforcement.

The more interesting issue, in this case, has to do with level of generalization. There are various levels of generality between the reason given in the footnote and “bad public policy.” Here are a few. At a relatively modest level of generality: “it will be harmful to (some) female loan applicants.” More generally: “It is discriminatory.” Still more generally: “It is socially unjust.” Each level subsumes the previous, plus something more. Considering the intermediate levels, it can be seen that “It’s bad public policy” is a rather extreme generalization.

Ben is constructing a recognizably common type of argument, what we might call a “problematic precedent” argument. An argument of this type claims that an action X should not be done because it will create a bad precedent, it will legitimate the performance of that sort of action, or the rule under which the action was done, which may not be a good idea. In the present case, the problematic precedent also represents an inconsistency in the staff’s enforce-the-law rhetoric. This is crucial, since the staff’s power to resist the administration’s new policy initiatives is based largely in and on that rhetoric. Given that Ben is constructing a problematic precedent argument, and given that he is invoking the conflict between the administration and the staff regarding the “economization” of enforcement policy, he has no choice but to generalize to the level of “bad public policy.” Consider what Ben’s argument would have looked like if he had chosen a lower level of generalization:

1. (a) We’re not enforcing this portion of Reg B because we think it will be harmful to female loan applicants.

(b) If Ted didn't enforce everything he thought was harmful to female loan applicants, where would you be?

2. (a) We're not enforcing this portion of Reg B because we think it is discriminatory.

(b) If Ted didn't enforce everything he thought was discriminatory, where would you be?

3. (a) We're not enforcing this portion of Reg B because we think it is socially unjust.

(b) If Ted didn't enforce everything he thought was socially unjust, where would you be?

The problem with these arguments is not grammatical—they are constructed of perfectly intelligible English sentences. Nor is it logical—they have the same logical form as Ben's actual argument (i.e., we are following a certain rule; it would be a problem for us if Ted followed the same rule). The difficulty lies at the discursive level. In each of these arguments, part (a) is a comprehensible and reasonable reformulation of footnote 21, paragraph 2. In each case, though, part (b) would be puzzling at best. If, for example, Ted refused to enforce every regulation that he thought was discriminatory, would that be a problem for the staff? Only if his criteria for discrimination were very inclusive, more so than the staff's. The staff had no reason to suppose that Ted saw discrimination under every rock—quite the opposite. In general, the administration tended to avoid any criteria of judgment other than economic. Arguments 1-3 above do not work (in this context) because there is no available frame of knowledge in which they would make sense. In short, part (b) of the argument will be intelligible only when the reason for nonenforcement is generalized to “bad public policy,” for it is at this level that the implications of the administration's free market approach are clear and where their application of the rule “Don't enforce any regulation which is X” would result in general nonenforcement. From the administration's (and especially Ted's) point of view, any regulation that interferes with the free functioning of market processes is likely to be bad

public policy. It should be noted that it does not appear possible to preserve the argument if the reason is generalized beyond “bad public policy,” to, say, “public policy.” Indeed, at this point, it ceases to be an intelligible reason at all. Thus, the level of generalization is fixed with some precision. The formulation is fitted to an argument, and the argument is embedded in the organizational discourse.

Ben’s use of “bad public policy” does not invoke contrasting formulations. He is not, for example, making the point that this rule is bad public policy as against other rules which are good public policy. Nor does “bad public policy” invoke a co-ordinate family of formulations (for example, categorizing one individual as “passenger” might involve categorizing another as “driver”). The relevant contrast is between “us” and Ted, between staff and administration in their relation to bad public policy. In making judgments concerning policy and enforcement, the staff employed various criteria (see Bilmes and Woodbury 1991), including, prominently, social justice. The administration was fixed on one criterion—economic efficiency. Because of its faith in the self-organizing properties of the market, the administration was likely, in theory at least, to find any attempts at economic regulation to be economically inefficient and thus bad policy. The significance of “bad public policy,” then, lay in its lack of definite reference, in its openness to interpretation.

Conclusion: taxonomies are for talking

The object of analysis in this chapter has been a reformulation—a rather specific reason in a footnote to an FTC draft memo was generalized as “we think it’s bad public policy.” Because it was a reformulation, the act of generalization was made visible. But my argument is not limited to reformulation: any formulation may be looked at in terms of what Schegloff (2000) calls its granularity. We can always ask “What are the conversational consequences of saying ‘rodent’ (or ‘vermin’) rather than ‘rat’, ‘red’ rather than ‘scarlet’, ‘New York’ rather than ‘Times Square’, ‘in the evening’ rather than ‘at seven p.m.’?” The matters we need to consider may range from the local, such as recipient design, to the broad discursive and normative environments. The direction and

level of generalization are particular aspects of formulations; there are, of course, other aspects (such as politeness). A sensitivity to generalization is particularly crucial for the study of argument, where relatively specific matters are transformed into cases in point (as with “bad public policy”), and specifications are used to provide examples or evidence for general points.

It will be apparent (to some readers, at least) that, despite my invocation of Sacks, I have not, in this study, chosen to abide by the methodological strictures of current day conversation analysis. To put the matter simply, there were things that I saw in the data that could not be arrived at under generally accepted conversation analytic constraints. My most drastic departure was to use invented examples of what could not have intelligibly been said. If one needs to show what can't be said, there is no recourse but invention. This is, to some extent, related to linguists' use of examples of ungrammatical strings, except that my claims are less general in that they are limited to a particular context, and my criterion concerns what can intelligibly said rather than an analyst's notion of correctness. The dangers of this procedure are obvious. The linguistic literature abounds with arguable instances of purported ungrammaticality. Although my invented examples were perfectly grammatical, I claimed them to be unintelligible, in this particular context, at a “higher” level of discourse. In the absence of definite proof procedures, how are we to validate such claims? The answer, for both linguists and analysts of discourse, is simply to avoid the fuzzy or ambiguous examples (perhaps more difficult for linguists because of the generality of their claims and the problems inherent in the very notion of grammaticality). A case can be made convincingly, even without formalized proof procedures. And, of course, a dubious claim is open to doubt and counterargument.

I approached this study from two perspectives. On the one hand, I wanted it to be a contribution to the literature (insofar as there is an organized literature) on formulation-in-talk. I had a second reason, though, for doing a study of this particular data. It is ethnographically dense. An analysis of the discussion of footnote 21 requires extensive knowledge of the political situation in the FTC. I am an anthropologist, so for me this

was an attraction. Moreover, analyzing the discussion produced further insight into the political situation. One begins to see how the staff handles a situation where its own rhetoric places constraints not only on the administration but on the staff itself. We begin to understand what the organizational controversy means, what its implications are, in terms of the staff's day-to-day activities. My joint interests in formulation and discursive ethnography came together in the finding that we cannot treat formulations in general, and "bad public policy" in particular, purely as products of local processes in specific situational moments; the formulations we choose are influenced by broad organizational and cultural discourses.

Chapter 8: Closing Thoughts

I believe that what I have been doing in this monograph is describing a set of what Garfinkel (1967) called “ethnomethods.” An ethnomethod is a way of accomplishing social order (or at least the sense thereof) or of “making sense,” of speaking or acting intelligibly or of interpreting speech and behavior as a competent member.

Ethnomethods, that is, are ways of producing and understanding behavior as orderly, comprehensible, “accountable.” Garfinkel’s central concerns were with how social behavior is made accountable (i.e., observable and reportable), but he also proposed a number of sense-making practices, such as, “let it pass,” and “et cetera.” Although my analyses look very different from Garfinkel’s sense-making principles, I would like to claim that I, too, am dealing with members’ practices for producing and understanding intelligible talk, and with the outcomes of those practices. I have, admittedly, devoted a good deal of attention to the logic and formal characteristics of taxonomy, that is, of hierarchy and contrast and co-categorization, but in the interest of analyzing actual conversation. My contrast maxims, for example, result from the examination of real talk and are potentially applicable to further cases. Interactants, in their talk, produce elaborate taxonomic constructions. My interest has not merely been to see those structures of meaning but to follow the sequential process through which they were created on each specific occasion. Although taxonomies have certain general, formal characteristics, and though some may have a standardized cultural content, they are, on each occasion of their appearance, created (in Garfinkel’s phrase) “for another first time.”

Although I want to elucidate the methods that members use to produce sensible talk and complex structures of meaning, I do not take it that my phenomena are observable/reportable to the naïve member. In Garfinkel’s analyses, the object is to explain the social world which is available to all of us. A queue or an interview is, for members, readily identifiable; it is there for anyone to see. It is a visible part of the

member's commonsense world. Garfinkel's question is, how do we make it happen?⁶² A structure of meaning in conversation is there, too, in the sense that participants construct it, elaborate it, and use it. But it is not necessarily observable and reportable. It is, in this sense, like a grammar, present, usable, but not readily visible. That is why we have linguists. However, a grammar is (supposedly) a tacit resource—it pre-exists the talk in which it is realized. An occasioned taxonomy is not like that, it is not necessarily a pre-existing resource—it may be, on any particular occasion, a novel creation. And, of course, even when a particular taxonomic structure is, like grammar, “culturally available,” it must be invoked on each occasion of use. Nevertheless, though it is, in its creation and/or deployment, a participants' phenomenon, it may, like a grammar, require an analyst to “discover” it.

In developing this taxonomic approach, my early inspiration was Frake's (1961) observation about the flexibility of taxonomic reference in talk, i.e., the possibility of selecting the level of generality/specificity to achieve particular conversational objectives. Frake's point can be taken as a corrective to a later development in taxonomic theory—the notion of “basic level” or “generic” categories (Berlin 1976; Berlin, Breedlove, and Raven 1974; Lakoff 1987; Rosch 1977, 1978; Rosch, Mervis, Gray, Johnson, and Boyes-Braem 1976). As I mentioned in Chapter 2, basic level categories are those which are first learned, are most commonly used as labels (e.g., “car” as opposed to “vehicle”), are the highest level at which categories have similar shapes, about which we are the most knowledgeable, etc. Basic level categories have been given particular currency in cognitive linguistics by the work of George Lakoff (1987). These categories are discovered through interview and experimentation, and also, less formally, by noticing the most usual way that people refer to things. They are not discovered through observation of how participants construct their talk in actual occasions of interaction. According to Berlin (1992; see also Rosch 1977, 1978), generic taxa, such as

⁶² It should be added, though, that, in the course of analysis, one begins to see queues in a rather different, more elaborate, way. The moral dimensions and the ambiguities, for example, become more visible.

"rat" are most salient to native speakers, the default choice. But, of course, sometimes we choose to use higher or lower levels of taxonomic classification. Moreover, the notion of generic or basic level seems to apply only to a certain set of culturally routinized taxonomies. It is not at all clear that this notion has any application to, e.g., the choice of "bad public policy" versus more specific or general formulations. The studies of basic level concepts, as well as ethnosemantic taxonomic analysis in general, is aimed toward elucidating static structures of cognitive salience.

Frake's insight points us away from cognition toward talk and interaction, in which categorical choices have implications for the business at hand. He provides the seed of a different approach to the matter, consistent with Wittgenstein's notions of use, Garfinkel's indexicality, and Sacks' treatment of categories in talk. Categories, as Edwards (1991) put it, are for talking, and this is what Frake had glimpsed. The actual use of categories is not simply a matter of actuating some pre-existing cognitive structure; rather, the taxonomic direction and level chosen is fitted to the local occasion of use. Category usage is thus treated as a form of social action, not as a manifestation of culturally constituted minds.

The notion of indexicality deserves some further comments. The radical position is expressed by Garfinkel (1967: 28-9), who suggested that we

drop the assumption that in order to describe a usage as a feature of a community of understandings we must at the outset know what the substantive understandings consist of. With it, drop the assumption's accompanying theory of signs, according to which "sign" and "referent" are respectively properties of something said and something talked about.... If these notions are dropped, then what the parties talked about could not be distinguished from how the parties were speaking. ... the recognized sense of what a person said consists only and entirely in recognizing the method of his speaking, of seeing how he spoke.

Rather than getting into a complicated evaluation of Garfinkel’s position, a simple observation will serve—if we take Garfinkel literally, if meaning was expressed entirely through how we talked, there would be no point in speaking language. Grunting would suffice.⁶³

Consider Garfinkel’s (1967: 25ff.) famous example of indexicality, the description of a small boy putting a coin in a parking meter.

Husband: Dana succeeded in putting a penny in a parking meter today without being picked up.

Wife: Did you take him to the record store?

Husband: No, to the shoe repair shop.

Wife: What for?

Husband: I got some new shoe laces for my shoes.

Wife: Your loafers need new heels badly.

Garfinkel found that each utterance occasioned understandings that were not explicitly expressed in the talk. For instance, it is understood that this is the first time that Dana has managed to put money in the meter without assistance. Garfinkel found, though, that each account required a further accounting. The attempt to make an utterance or its interpretation fully explicit was bound to fail. There is an infinite regress of indexicality. Garfinkel’s point is well taken, but I would add that, if we didn’t understand the words as semantic objects, we would have nothing.

When I brought this up with Garfinkel, he said that he meant for this (i.e., dropping the notion of “sign”) to be taken as policy, not theory. By this qualification, I

⁶³ In a discussion of Bilmes (2011), Maynard (2011) writes that “from an ethnomethodological perspective, analysis is not a contest between foregrounding “what” or “how;” it is a matter in which the what and how of everyday life are inextricably intertwined...” (204). (Maynard’s argument appears to be a restatement of Garfinkel’s discussion of meaning [1967: 25ff.], although Garfinkel does privilege “how” over “what.”) I am not denying the reflexivity of “how” and “what”; I am simply insisting that one brings to the talk a prior knowledge of language.

suppose he meant that it would be profitable for the researcher to proceed as if meaning were entirely indexical, entirely a product of how the parties spoke. This is not the stance that I have chosen. My position is that the meaning of our talk is always indexical, but not entirely so.⁶⁴ Consider, for instance, “By smack you mean hit” (see chapter 5). Both smack and hit have multiple meanings. Smack could refer to a type of boat or to heroin; hit could mean a great success, as in hit song. The current meanings are clarified by a number of contextual features—the nature of the occasion, the phrase “smack her,” the co-occurrence of smack and hit. And, it would at the least be odd for B to say “By smack you mean curse,” although curse would make sense in this context. The problem with this locution is that smack does not mean curse. Perhaps there is some imaginable context where it would make sense to say that smack means curse, but the interpretive process would have to take as its starting point the semantics of smack and curse. How we understand an expression in context is always influenced by language and other forms of cultural knowledge.

Sacks’ work on categories centered to a large extent on the question of how we select from an array of available categorizations the one to be used on this occasion. I raise another question of similarly broad application—given that categorization can be offered at various levels of generality, how do we chose a particular level on some particular occasion? This question was, of course, inspired by Frake’s observations on the uses of disease categories. Frake’s insight, however, was largely undeveloped in his own work and within taxonomic theory generally. He (and others) did not seem to appreciate the significance or prevalence of the phenomenon he had located. And Frake himself cast his observation in psychological terms; mobility of taxonomic reference was a product of personal goals rather than a feature of argument structure or other conversational circumstances. Furthermore, Frake and other anthropological taxonomic theorists tended to be somewhat inattentive to the fact that words participated in multiple

⁶⁴ This is hardly a unique or revolutionary position. As Maynard (2011:202) writes: “meaning can be pan-situational and locally emergent at the same time.”

taxonomies, a result, perhaps, of their interest in cognitive structures as set features of the cultural mind. Finally, and perhaps most tellingly, Frake was not working with actual instances of talk-in-context, or at least not subjecting such instances to close analysis. The result of this inattention to actual talk was a failure to notice the interactive elements and indexical contingencies in taxonomy construction. It was left to Harvey Sacks to initiate the study of categories as they appeared in actual occasions of talk, and to put aside the cognitive concerns of previous researchers in favor of a concern with conversational phenomena.

Although one of my starting points has been the ethnographic analysis of folk taxonomies, I have made certain technical changes to suit my objectives. I have, to begin with, broadened the definition of taxonomy. I have introduced the notion of hybrid taxonomy. And I have suggested various notations that allow taxonomic diagrams to more fully and accurately represent actual talk. I don't know whether any of these innovations could have useful applications within ethnosemantics, but it has not been my objective to contribute to the study of folk taxonomies. My interest is in the on-the-spot work of categorization/formulation as an aspect of the production of social action and structures of understanding.

My reasons for turning to taxonomic representation are very simple. The use of taxonomic diagrams offers an economical way to describe crucial aspects of categorical relations and possibilities in a spate of talk. By offering a visualization of category structure, it aids us in thinking about aspects of category structure which might otherwise have escaped our attention. Maynard (2011:204), commenting on the programmatic discussion in Bilmes (2011), states: "If it is possible to locate a greeting object by way of how participants deploy the object in the concreteness of time and space, the analyst does not need a taxonomy or access to an array of speaker choices to know exactly what participants understand in a definitional, hierarchical or other sense as they work to assemble a joint course of action." Arguing this in the abstract seems fruitless. The proof is in the pudding, the evidence in the exposition. If the reader is satisfied that my analyses in the preceding chapters produced insights of a kind that would have been hard

to come by without a taxonomic sensitivity, then I can rest my case. If the reader is not satisfied that I have produced worthwhile analyses, or that the taxonomic approach facilitated the analyses, then my position is hopeless. There is nothing I can say to repair the situation.

Presumably, though, the disgruntled reader will not have gotten this far, so I am writing for the reader who thinks that something of value has been achieved. Although my primary aim has been to produce useful analyses rather than “findings,” nevertheless, there are findings. Here is a partial list:

1. Occasioned taxonomies are not representations of any participant’s conceptual structure or of the participants’ shared knowledge. Rather, they represent emergent structures of meaning in conversation.
2. Occasioned taxonomies are not necessarily constructed in conversation in a linear fashion, top-to-bottom or bottom-to-top. They may be cobbled together bit by bit, from every direction. The ultimate coherence of the structure arises from the participants’ sensitivity to the parts that were already in place.
3. Some taxonomic relations are, to a degree at least, “in the language,” whereas others are developed on the spot.
4. Different taxonomies of the same set of items may be deployed one after another to achieve different effects.
5. Inferences may be occasioned and actions achieved by the degree and type of generalization.
6. Generalization is conditioned by what I have called the discursive environment. This applies both to the degree of generalization and to the type of classification involved (e.g., rodent vs. vermin)
7. Categories may be unmentioned but demonstrably implicated.
8. Sequence must be attended to, since conversational taxonomies are built turn by turn; taxonomies are built in and through interaction, by one or more than one party.

9. Inclusion relations, in the form of examples, are reflexive: the sense and coherence of the examples are defined by the classifying term, while the sense of the classifying turn is clarified and elaborated by its examples.
10. The items included in a superordinate term may be in contrast, as in classic taxonomic theory, but they may also have an additive relation.
11. I have proposed a number of inclusion maxims and contrast maxims, which affect the production and understanding of utterances.
12. Another finding, from Bilmes (2009b): Autohyponymy—the use of a term in a marked and an unmarked sense, that is, at more than one taxonomic level—is the source of metaphor.

Although I am continually interested in how categorization is used to advance or even constitute social action, and I hope to have cast some light on that matter, my primary concern is, as the title of this volume indicates, with the structures of meaning that are built in talk. A taxonomic approach is clearly suited to this interest. The presumption, as well as the finding, of this work is that participants, in the course of conversation, add meaning upon meaning, forming orderly, sometimes complex, systems of relationships. Each new meaning is enabled and constrained by, articulated with, what has already occurred. The end result, although any ending may be provisional, is a structure of understandings, and, occasionally, disagreements. My aim has been to describe these structures and how they are produced.

Garfinkel and Sacks (1970:341) write that “the properties of indexical expressions are ordered properties, and...that they are ordered is an ongoing, practical accomplishment of every actual occasion of commonplace speech and conduct.” This, I take it, is precisely the subject of this monograph. The structures I examine are participant-wrought or participant-invoked, context-bound, phenomena of the moment. They may, to be sure, be remembered, cited, built-upon in future interaction, but, to the degree that they are not “in the culture,” they may also be forgotten. These structures are

not things—they are descriptions of something beautiful that we do, however unknowingly, when we talk. To understand these structures is to understand something very fundamental about human discourse and social life.

Appendix 1: Negotiating the meaning of a gesture

The exchange under consideration is from the Donahue/Posner show on CNBC, October 14, 1993.⁶⁵ This day's show was on the subject of sexual harassment. In addition to the regular panel of Phil Donahue and Vladimir Posner, Debbie Brake of The National Women's Law Center was also commenting, via TV feed. The show began with a discussion of a harassment case that was currently before the Supreme Court. Then they took phone calls which dealt with various harassment-related matters, but not necessarily with the Supreme Court case. One call was from a man who described some circumstances relating to a charge of sexual harassment that had been lodged against him. After talking to the caller, the following exchange took place:

(1) Donahue-Posner (Oct. 14, 1993) Click on image to play video recording

1. Posner: You know there's one point he ((the previous
2. caller)) may be making (.5) and that is that
3. sometimes women will use: .hh this whole
4. issue: .hh (.) an' it- (.) like anyone will there
5. are oppor[tunities (.) among
6. Donahue: [It is possible to abuse this.
7. P: Right=
8. D: =Sit down on a park bench a woman starts crying
9. rape.
10. P: Well I=
11. D: =I don't think th[at- I think that's very rare
12. P: [Well I'll tell you what
13. (.) I (was in) (.) I was in a bu:s in New York
14. City=I got up to give my seat to a woman (.) who

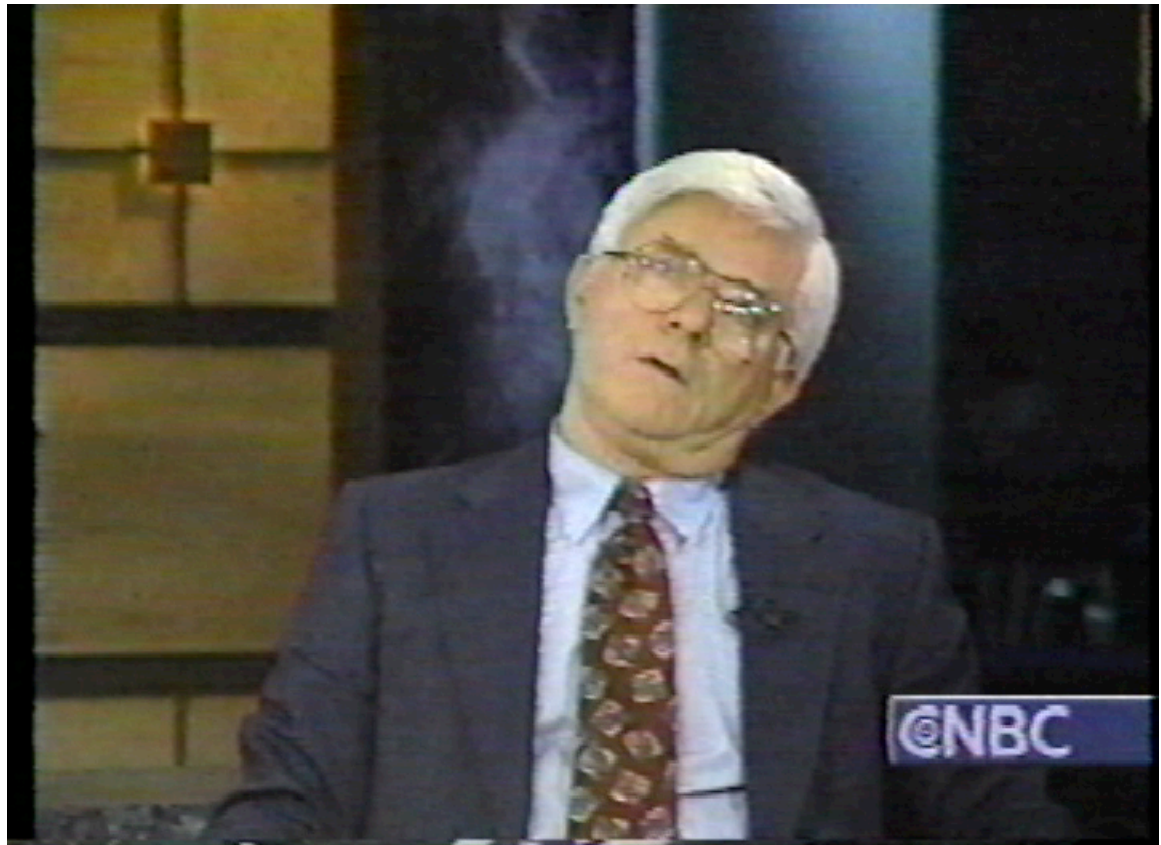


⁶⁵ See Bilmes (2005) for a discussion of certain other aspects of this segment.

15. told me: (.) I was a male sexist (.) because I (.)
16. I was taught by my mother that when a woman comes
17. in an' she's got no place to sit down=
18. D: =Yeah
19. P: you: get up as a sign of respect.=
20. D: =She thought [you were being patronizing?=
21. P: [(So you know)
22. P: =and she thought I was [hitting on her or=
23. D: [(you were * izing her)=
24. P: =something. I don' know
25. D: =No no no she was sa^ying don't treat me
26. Brake: [Let me just bring us back t'
27. r: reality [here. There's a very big difference=
28. D: [Yeah
29. B: =betwee::n: .hh calling someone a sexist for
30. giving up their sea:t and actually bringing a
31. sexual harassment claim.
32. ?: (*[*])
33. B: [.hh Really no woman wants to be dra:gged through
34. the mu::d in the way that a sexual harrassment
35. victim is dragged through the mu::d (.) unless
36. something very serious happened to her: (.) that
37. was discriminatory in the workplace. (.5)
38. D: Yeah (.) .hh uh:: (1) Atlanta I c'n- I remember the
39. fi:rst ti:me -I referred (1) to- A- Atlanta Georgia
40. are ya there? ((last five words in a louder,
41. 'calling' tone of voice))
42. Caller from Atlanta: Yes sir

43. D: Uh: (.) jus' to- gi- I- I once (.) I- this is
 44. twenty five years ago I was moderating a panel (.)
 45. and a woman (.) raised her hand=it was my job to
 46. call on people .hh I said ye:s ho:ney? (1) ((let's
 47. jaw drop and then falls back in his chair with open
 48. mouth, as if to say 'Oh boy, what a mistake!' or
 49. 'Can you imagine?!' Posner begins to speak during
 50. the course of this gesture.))
 51. P: Oh (that'll) O::h (.) ye::s (.5) [ri:ght
 52. D: [A- It was the
 53. beginning of my: o::wn: (.) coming of age so to
 54. speak for the second ti::me That is a- that i:s a
 55. pa:tronizing [wo:rd
 56. P: [Now what if a wo-
 57. D: Who do [I think I a:m calling this
 58. P: [Wha- (.) wha- What if a wo:man had been up
 59. there and a ma:n had raised his hand and she said
 60. okay you hunk (.) Whatta you wanna say. Would that
 61. be::?
 62. D: ye- uh
 63. P: hu:h?
 64. D: a[:h
 65. P: [Would i:t? (.8) Come o:n Phi:l .hh ther- You go
 66. too fA::r with this

I want to examine here the interaction surrounding Donahue's gesture in line 46. It looked like this:



In the discussion leading up to this gesture, Posner has described an incident that occurred on a bus that, to his mind, illustrated a woman's baseless charge of male sexism. Donahue, in line 25, takes issue with Posner's interpretation of the incident. Donahue's point, looking back to line 20, seems to be that the woman found Posner's behavior patronizing. After Brake's interruption and the initial acceptance of a phone call, Donahue returns to the subject, mentioning an occasion when he called a woman in his audience "honey."⁶⁶ He then makes a falling back gesture, suggesting that something, at that point, went very wrong. Posner, in line 51, produces agreement tokens, apparently thinking that the gesture referred to the woman's overreaction and that Donahue's story was, in that sense, analogous to his own previous story about the woman on the bus. It

⁶⁶ In a delicate bit of facework, Donahue finds that he has to search back a quarter of a century to find an example of when he behaved improperly toward a woman.

turns out, though, as becomes evident in lines 52-55, that Donahue's gesture referred to his own purportedly improper behavior. As this becomes clear, in fact right after the word "patronizing," Posner cuts in with a challenge, concluding with "you go too far with this."

What we see here, then, is that Donahue produces an ambiguous gesture, Posner, through his agreement tokens, offers an interpretation of the gesture's meaning, Donahue continues in a way that makes it clear that Posner's interpretation was incorrect, and Posner, in effect, corrects his hearing and changes his response to one of disagreement. This is a clear example of the sequential vicissitudes of meaning in conversation.

Appendix 2: “The Baby Cried” Reconsidered

Three of Sacks’ major points on “The baby cried. The mommy picked it up” are:

(a) Sacks asks how we know that the mommy is the mommy of the baby. “Baby,” he claims, belongs to two “devices”—a device being a collection (i.e., a set of categories that go together, that is, a set of categories which are themselves members of a more general category, as “male” and “female” are members of the category “sex”) and its rules of application—a stage-of-life device and a family device. “Baby” is a member of the category “age group” and also a member of the category “family member”. The ambiguity is resolved by the use of “mommy”. Sacks proposes three rules to explain this. According to the “economy rule,” “a single category from a membership categorization device can be referentially adequate”. So, for instance, the category “baby” is sufficient reference for the purposes of this story. The consistency rule states “If some population of persons is being categorized, and if a category from some device’s collection has been used to categorize a first member of the population, then that category or other categories of the same collection may be used to categorize further members of the population”. So, if “second baseman” is mentioned, there is a distinct possibility that another member of the group will be categorized as “pitcher” or “shortstop” rather than “Catholic” or “teenager.” There is also a “corollary” of the consistency rule which holds that “if two or more categories are used to categorize two or more members of some population, and these categories can be heard as categories from the same collection, then: Hear them that way”.⁶⁷ So, given that both “mommy” and “baby” can be heard as members of the family category, that is how we will hear them. Moreover, since families, like teams, are “duplicatively organized” (Sacks 1992, Vol. 1: 240), we will hear them as belonging to the same family.

⁶⁷ Although this “hearer’s maxim” was created to deal with cases of alternative categorizations (e.g. rat as rodent or vermin), it also handles polysemy. So, pitcher in conjunction with catcher is a ball player, but, in conjunction with cup, it is a container for liquid.

I think that Sacks' argument on this point is flawed. First, it is notable, although I have never seen it noted, that Sacks' gives us no context for this bit of data other than that it is the beginning of a story by a two-and-three-quarters year old girl in a book titled Children Tell Stories. We don't know how the story continues. We don't know how it was elicited—was she talking about a picture? This dearth of contextual information is especially puzzling given the amount of attention that he lavishes on these two sentences. These contextual matters may be analytically significant. If, for instance, the storyteller were looking at a picture, it would explain her use of “the,” a usage which otherwise might be ascribed to her imperfect command of language.

Looking at what is in Sacks' analysis rather than what is left out, I think that Sacks is incorrect in saying that baby belongs to two devices—age and family. Baby, unlike child, is not ambiguous as between age and family membership. Baby, in its literal usage, refers to an age-group. For this very reason, one cannot literally refer to an adult as a baby, although an adult can, literally, be someone's child. So, “I have two children” says nothing about their ages, whereas “I have two babies” cannot be applied, except metaphorically, to older children or adults. (Many languages have two words that would be translated as “child,” one for child as offspring and one that refers to an individual as a member of an age group.) Furthermore, we must attend to a crucial aspect of the word's context—its situation within a nominal phrase. Since, I have argued, “baby” is not ambiguous to begin with, let's use the semantically ambiguous “child” as our example. The phrase “the child” signals, in most contexts, that we are referring to age (unless the phrase is “the child of”), whereas “my child” refers to family membership. So, even if “baby” were ambiguous, the phrase “the baby” would make it clear that the reference is to age. (Of course, the phrase “my baby” does invoke family membership, but so does “my teen-ager” or “my little fireman.” It is the possessive pronoun that recruits teen-agers and firemen—and babies—into the family.)

Why, then, do we hear “the mommy” as the parent of “the baby” in this story? Given that the adult in question could be formulated as, e.g., woman or lady, we are led to ask why this more marked formulation? “Mommy” is unambiguously a family

member. We assume, therefore, that she is formulated in this way because she is the mother of the baby who cried. (Consider: “The teen-ager was rude. The mother scolded him.”⁶⁸) But, again, the nominal phrase is crucial. In fact, Sacks himself (1992, Vol. 1: 228) notes: “if ‘mommy’ is the normal expansion of women who are not my mommy or aunt—they are then ‘a mommy’ or ‘X’s mommy’” (as opposed to “the mommy”). Again, we require a linguistic, as well as categorial, analysis.

One further thought: If the story was “The baby cried. The nanny (or the babysitter) picked it up,” would we not be likely to hear “the nanny” as the nanny of the baby? How does Sacks’ analysis apply to this case? I think, as in the case of “mommy,” that the interpretation is guided by the categorization of the adult. Why formulate the woman as a nanny, unless she is the nanny of the baby?

So, we might say that Sacks was guilty of “misplaced semanticization.” That is, noting that the baby would be understood as the mommy’s child, he attributed this to the semantics of baby.

(b) The second major point of Sacks’ analysis is that membership categories are associated with particular activities. He calls these “category-bound” activities. Thus, the category “baby” is associated with crying. When a category is invoked, it brings with it a set of possibly relevant activities. And mention of an activity, in turn, may invoke the associated category. This is recognized in Sacks’ second hearer’s maxim: “If a category-bound activity is asserted to have been done by a member of some category where, if that category is ambiguous (i.e., is a member of at least two different devices) but where at least for one of those devices the asserted activity is category-bound to the given category, then hear that at least the category from the device to which it is bound is being asserted to hold” (1992:250). So, as Sacks recognizes, the “stage-of-life” hearing of “baby” is a correct hearing. (He continues to insist, though, that the “family” hearing

⁶⁸ This example brings up some interesting complexities. It would be odd to say “The teen-ager was rude. The mommy scolded him.” Perhaps a two-and-three-quarters year old child would use mommy in this story, but would a child of that age be using the term teen-ager to begin with? It seems to me that, even for an adult story-teller, mommy can appropriately be paired to baby, but, when speaking of a teen-ager, it cannot.

is also warranted, by the consistency rule corollary.) The concept of category-bound activity is not exactly original—one thinks, for example, of role theory—but Sacks' use of it to analyze conversation was an innovation, and subsequent studies in MCA rely heavily on this concept.

(c) Sacks points out that the baby's crying and the mommy's picking it up are ordered acts. First the baby cried and then the mother picked it up. He proposes that this perception of sequence is produced not so much by the ordering of the sentences (cf., Labov and Waletzky 1967) as by our notion that a mother picking up a baby is commonly occasioned by the baby crying. (See, especially, Sacks 1992: 244–245.) That is, we see not merely a sequence of behaviors, but events linked by causation. We suppose that the mother's action was consequent on the baby's. I think Sacks is not entirely correct on this point. How would we hear “The mommy picked the baby up. It cried.”? It would seem to me that the ordering of the sentences is, in this case, determinative. I think this narrative would normally be heard as suggesting that the mother, by picking the baby up, caused it to cry. (Of course, the second sequence is puzzling in a way that the first is not: why would the mommy's picking up of the baby make it cry?) Perhaps the more crucial point that Sacks is making, though, is that, when we hear of some sequentially ordered sequence of events, we infer, when necessary, some mechanism— causation, purpose, etc.—that connects the events and accounts for their ordering.

Sacks' crucial contribution to category analysis was his insistence on studying categories as they are actually used in situated talk and his attempt to create a formal “apparatus” for dealing with categories-in-use. His analysis of “The baby cried” is, I think, somewhat flawed, but it is also original and inspiring. One can go to other sources (e.g., Fitzgerald and Housley 2015; Hester and Eglin 1997; Jayusi (1984); Lepper 2000; Schegloff 2007c; Silverman 1998) for more complete (and less critical) expositions of MCA.

Appendix 3: Invoking Context: Schegloff's Criteria and their Implications for Ethnography

The force and the revolutionary character of conversation analysis (CA) as a new field of study lies at least as much in its methodology as in its subject matter. It seems that, for each great problematic in social scientific methodology—meaning, description, rule, category, context—conversation analysis generates its own unique solution (see, for example, Bilmes 1988, Moerman and Sacks 1988, Schegloff 1988, 1984). The core of this productive approach, its great central idea, is its hyper-emic, hyper-empirical, participant orientation, and the foremost interpreter of this idea, the systematizer and the oracle of CA has been Emanuel Schegloff, who, over the years, has laid out a fully articulated rationale and conceptual framework for CA. In particular, his notions regarding the invocation of context in conversation analysis have relevance not only for CA but also for ethnography.

Context has been a live and productive topic in the social sciences at least since "the context of situation" and "the definition of the situation" were proposed by Malinowski (1923, 1935) and W. I. Thomas/D. S. Thomas (1928) respectively. But along with the recognition that context is crucial in the determination of meaning and, ultimately, social action, came the recognition that the notion of context is highly problematic. Gellner (1970) points out the same problem as Schegloff—the promiscuous invocation of context. That is, the ethnographer may choose to invoke those contextual elements, out of an indefinitely large universe, that support a desired interpretation or a particular view of the world.

The “strong” conversation analytic position was articulated by Psathas (1990): “We cannot know of the hearer-speakers’ past relationships, their biographies and their histories except as these are made available to and discoverable by us in the specific instance of their current co-presence” (7). Or again, “There is, in general, no interest in the ethnographic particulars of persons, places, and settings. Rather the interest is in discovering structures of interaction...” (Psathas 1995: 45). As Silverman and Gubrium

(1994) put it, “CA is resistant to appeals by the researcher to external contextual explanations for what is happening in interaction. For CA, the problem is that such explanations deflect the researcher from describing how the parties concerned attend to the local production of shared understandings” (181). A nuanced, rigorous, fully articulated statement of the strong position is to be found in Schegloff (1991). Most of the discussions that followed, and some that preceded, Schegloff’s article take a more relaxed attitude in regard to the use of contextual information,⁶⁹ but Schegloff’s presentation still, to my mind, constitutes the most systematic, powerful, and penetrating statement on the matter, and I will structure my discussion around his major points.

I want to reconsider Schegloff’s three major tenets regarding the invocation of social structure. I will examine them in connection with the invocation of ethnographic and cultural context in explaining conversational phenomena.⁷⁰ I will be examining general methodological issues, but, as a discourse-oriented anthropologist, I am specifically interested in CA-for-ethnography and ethnography-for-CA, so some of my discussion is grounded in the divergent objectives of CA and ethnography. I should mention that Schegloff recognizes explicitly that his principles apply to CA and are not necessarily binding for other approaches, although he does suggest that respect for the constraints on the study of talk-in-interaction might produce a “fresh turning” for students of social structure (Schegloff 1991:65). I think that any social scientist who deals with action or meaning from an emic perspective must come to grips, in one way or another,

⁶⁹ There is a small literature on the invocation of context in conversation analysis. From an anthropological point of view, see, e.g., Bilmes (1996, 1992), Briggs (1997) Levinson (2005), Moerman (1988). Other discussions of context in CA include Chevalier (2008); Day (2008); de Kok (2008); Dupret and Ferrie (2008); Komter (2012); Koole 1997; Mandelbaum (1990/91); Maynard (2003); McHoul (2008); McHoul, Rapley, and Antaki (2008); Paoletti (2012); Silverman and Gubrium (1994); Zimmerman (1992), among others.

⁷⁰ Schegloff’s discussion is initially directed to social structure, but later is expanded to “context” and “setting” in a seemingly more general sense. At any rate, my concern is if and how his tenets can apply to context in a sense that includes ethnographic, biographical, and cultural, as well as social structural particulars. I think there is profit in this, regardless of whatever boundaries Schegloff might want to impose on his own proposals.

with Schegloff's criteria for the invocation of context. So, the major question that I want to raise in this discussion is, "What happens when ethnographers take Schegloff's criteria seriously?" The fact that the article in which Schegloff laid out his position is rather old (Schegloff 1991) does not diminish its importance or relevance. His arguments are compelling, and no one, to my knowledge, has engaged with them directly, point by point, although there have been a number of authors, beginning with Moerman (1988), who have promoted a less restrictive approach.

Locus of explanation

The first tenet is: if a conversational phenomenon can be explained using materials provided by the conversation itself (as illuminated by CA findings on methodic practices), explain it that way. There is no need or warrant for introducing external social structural or other contextual/ethnographic explanations. If some set of features "are part of the methodic practices for doing sequences of that sort, then there is no warrant for introducing social structures of that sort into the account. They are not 'needed'" (Schegloff 1991: 59. See also Schegloff 1997)). This quote expresses a theme that runs through Schegloff's work—phenomena are best explained with observations that are internal to the conversation itself. That is, when one has a choice between conversation-endogenous and conversation-exogenous explanations, choose the former. We might call this "Schegloff's Razor." It is, I think, more than a simple application of Occam's Razor, because it makes an "interested" decision as to which entities are unnecessary. That is, we can easily reverse it and say that when social structure accounts for the conversational phenomenon in question there is no warrant for introducing methodic sequential practices.

Consider the two following segments, both from a meeting at the U.S. Federal Trade Commission. B is an assistant director of the division in which this meeting takes place. P is a program director, just below B in the status hierarchy. M is a staff attorney. In segment (1), P is explaining why she wants to include a certain charge (illegally asking loan applicants about marital status) in the division's case against the XYZ Loan

Company. B objects that a charge without a proposed penalty will not deter future violations.

(1) XYZ 10/7:1

1. P: U:h (3) for the deterrence value: of having this in
2. an order (.5) If creditors don't ask (1) and don't
3. have the information (1) then they can't
4. intentionally discriminate on the basis of marital
5. status `hh If they have the information (1) then we
6. have to con- then- we are put to: a much greater
7. burden as an enforcement agency in determining
8. whether or not they've used it illegally.=
9. B: =(It will happen) if the deterrence: if you charged
10. them ten thousand dollars for each time we were
11. able to and no deterrence if it's issued in (**)
12. (1) Nothing. (1)
13. M: So why don't we charge 'em. (1) I don't have any
14. prob[lem with not charging
15. B: [You know that. I mean it's just another piece
16. of paper

The second segment, earlier in the same meeting, involves the same persons. B is characterizing the contents of the memo they are reviewing, which was written by M and another staff attorney under P's supervision.

- (2) XYZ 10/7:2
1. B: We're not enforcing this portion of Reg B because
 2. we think it's bad public policy (3.5)
 3. P: Wellhhh (1)
 4. B: Pau:la: (1)

5. M: Shall we take it out? (1) and just not (.) address
6. the [issue
7. B: [If Fred didn't enforce everything he thought
8. was bad p(h)ublic p(h)olicy whe(h)re w(h)ould
9. (h)you b(h)e (1.5)

These two segments are strikingly similar in the following respect: In each, B challenges P. In each, P does not respond immediately. In each, M, after a pause, makes a proposal. And, in each case, B ignores M and readdresses P. We can account for this outcome on the basis of the internal structure of the exchange. B is pursuing his interactional business with P, which accounts for his ignoring M. We have an internal explanation in terms of the interactional procedures of the participants. Nothing further, it seems, is required. However, I would claim that this interactional structure would have been, at the least, highly unlikely if it had been B who was interceding in M's interactional business; M, I believe, would attend to B's interjection. That is, it is crucial that B was M's organizational superior. Although I cannot demonstrate that my analysis on this point is true except by appeal to my ethnographic intuition, the point is that it could be true and is in fact plausible. The internal, interaction-based explanation is necessary but not sufficient. The social structural factor, very likely, conditions the interactional structure. Levinson (2005: 451) puts it this way: “Even if one thinks of social systems and grammar as the outcome of aeons of interactional events, at any one point they have a coercive, constraining influence on what interactants can do and what they can mean.”

A brief hypothetical example will serve to illustrate a somewhat more extreme possibility. Persons X, Y, and Z, members of culture C, are co-present, but the conversation takes place entirely between X and Y, with Z remaining silent. Analyst SL (a sociolinguist) points out that, in culture C, because of status considerations, Z is not permitted to talk in X's presence. Analyst CA (a conversation analyst) notes that the internal structure of the conversation is such as to discourage Z from speaking. Even in

the absence of status differences, Z would not speak. There is, therefore, no warrant for introducing relative status into the account. SL counters that, even in the absence of the sequential constraints cited by CA, Z would not speak because of the status considerations. By SL's lights, it is "the methodic practices for doing sequences of that sort" which are superfluous.

This example suggests that the explanation that one chooses will depend on one's analytic objectives. The analyst intent on explicating the sequential organization of conversation will naturally prefer, as Schegloff does, an explanation based on the methodic practices of conversation, whereas the analyst with ethnographic objectives may, at least sometimes, favor an explanation based in social structural considerations. But even though the interactional and social structural explanations are both adequate for this situation, each covers a different range of situations, so, I would argue, the best account, as in segments (1) and (2), would take into consideration both interactional and social structural factors.

Procedural consequentiality

I turn now to a second tenet—procedural consequentiality. "How does the fact that the talk is being conducted in some setting (say, 'the hospital') issue in any consequences for the shape, form, trajectory, content, or character of the interaction...?" (Schegloff, 1991: 53). My first question in relation to this criterion concerns whether it is necessary at all or is comprised in the third tenet—demonstrable relevance. How would relevance be demonstrated in the absence of the effects that Schegloff mentions? Schegloff certainly sees the two criteria as separate—showing that some characterization of the setting is relevant to participants is, for him, a different matter than showing how the context, so characterized, is procedurally consequential. I am not clear, however, on how such a separation is achieved. To say that the relevance of a setting is demonstrable, it seems to me, is tantamount to saying that the setting has had some consequence within the interaction. Apparently, Schegloff does not consider the mere mention of, or allusion to, a setting as a manifestation of procedural consequentiality. Perhaps the distinction,

then, is between mere reference to the setting (including indirect reference) and some further consequence of that setting on the interaction. This requires further clarification. A further question is: does procedural consequentiality imply demonstrable relevance; that is, if an item can be shown to be procedurally consequential is it, ipso facto, demonstrably relevant? My initial answer to this question is yes; if it affects their behavior, it must, in some way, be relevant to them, but I wonder if there are some wrinkles that I haven't considered.

Let us stipulate, for the sake of argument, that procedural consequentiality is a separate criterion from demonstrable relevance. That is, relevance may be mere reference or allusion, whereas consequentiality requires some further effect. Given that stipulation, I would argue that, while procedural consequentiality is an appropriate criterion for CA, it should not be required for ethnographic purposes. CA is the study of conversational organization. A (possible) contextual invocation which does not have any further conversational consequence is (arguably) not a feature of that organization. Ethnography, on the other hand, is the study of social organization and culture in a larger sense, so the ethnographer will be interested in contextual knowledge which informs the meaning-for-participants of the item in question. The ethnographer will be more insistent on understanding utterances in the way that natives understand them, whether or not that understanding has further consequences within the conversation. The ethnographer wants to understand native culture, native belief, native discourse for its own sake. Let us consider an example from my Northern Thai data. The setting is a rice field. Kææw and his wife, Dææng, are negotiating the division of the rice, which is currently harvested, threshed, and piled on the field, with Dii, the owner of the field. For reasons I won't go into here (see Bilmes 2014, 1996, 1995b, 1992), Kææw is demanding more than the sharecroppers' normal share. He is also asking that Dii pay half the cost of plowing, which is the matter at issue in this segment. Muun, a former headman of the village, is acting as mediator, but also as a spokesman for Dii. Others present included my Thai assistant, and two villagers.

(3) Bilmes (1996) translated from Northern Thai (Kammuang)

1. Muun: You are the one who works the fields. You can use your penis [to plow=
2. Dææng: [(**)]
3. Muun: =rather than [hire a tractor] (*)
4. Kææw: [Yeah] (.) of course (.8) What you say is correct.
5. (Muun or Dii): Yeah.
- 6.. Kææw: We work the padi [we can't use our penis to plow.
7. Dii: [As kham pet ((a villager)) [said
8. ?: [(*)]
9. Kææw: mhm
10. Dii: If you don't use a tractor, what will you do. You can hoe if you want, as
11. kham [pet says.
12. Muun: [(**)] [we don't have to talk about that (.5
13. Dææng: [We have no money.
14. Muun: =If we're speaking of dividing in [three (.5) di:- (.) di:=
15. Dææng: [so we hired for rice (*)
16. Muun: =will you agree? Kææw will you agree? (.5) Let it be done with

My interest here is in lines 10-11. Specifically, I want, as an ethnographer, to know whether hoeing is a real alternative or whether Dii is presenting a less extreme version of "use your penis to plow." The latter is the case—small fields can be worked with a hoe, but hoeing is not a practical alternative in working rice fields of any larger extent. Nothing seems to ride on this knowledge in terms of procedural consequentiality. Muun's line 12 is saying that we don't have to talk about the cost of plowing. Whether hoeing is or is not a practical alternative is not to the point—line 12 could follow in either case. But I, as ethnographer, want to understand lines 10-11 as the participants understood them, and so I call on the contextual knowledge just mentioned regarding field preparation methods. So, I conclude that, whatever the status of procedural

consequentiality within conversation analysis proper, it is not a binding principle for ethnographers, even those who, like myself, aspire to a conversation analytic sensibility.

Demonstrable relevance

This brings us to the final criterion—demonstrable relevance. We must, in Schegloff's (1991: 51) words "[show] from the details of the talk or other conduct in the materials that we are analyzing that those aspects of the scene are what the parties are oriented to" (his emphases). It seems to follow that a context is demonstrably relevant if it is referred to or alluded to by one or more of the participants or if it is procedurally consequential, that is, if it has any demonstrable effect on the talk in progress. It was my intention to propose at this point that this third criterion, demonstrable relevance, ought to be (with certain caveats) binding for discursively oriented ethnographers as well as conversation analysts. (In fact, I made such an argument in a previous publication [Bilmes 1996].) However, an acceptance of this criterion for ethnography depends on an expansive notion of demonstrability. Here is another segment from the same ricefield negotiation excerpted in (3).

(4) Bilmes (1992)

1. Muun: The committee ((the local villager-government committee
2. dealing with sharecropping and rental arrangements)) (*) (.) wants
3. us to do (.) ((clears throat)) (.) the usual way: the tenan- tenants
4. requested to do it the usual way (.5) and asked (.) the owners
5. to give an extra share (.5) a generous extra share (.) the
6. tenants [(they)
7. Kææw: [If it were as usual [(.) you
8. Muun: [They agreed to this.
9. Kææw: Yeah [usu- usually
10. Muun: [(*) (.) But what you do is up to you.

11. Kææw: Yeah, usu [ally there is good feeling and affection, right?
 12. Muun: [(*) say
 13. Muun: mhm
 14. Kææw: Yeah, good feeling and affection (.) and they divide in
 15. half.
 16. Muun: That's it.
 17. Kææw: They don't calculate.
 18. Muun: That's right.
 19. Kææw: Now (.5) there is no good feeling or affection between us
 20. so it seems we can't divide in half.
 21. Muun: (*) up to you
 22. Kææw: Yeah, I don't agree (.5) (*) today I won't divi[de.
 23. Muun: [I/we (.5)
 24. ((clears throat)) [I/we (*)
 25. Kææw: [(Tomorrow we) will divide.
 26. Muun: If you want to go according to the law you will have to go
 27. (1) to court yourself you'll have to hire a lawyer yourself.

I want to focus first on lines 22-5. Why divide tomorrow, why not today? The first thing to know is that there is a national law governing sharecropping which specifies a division that is more favorable to the sharecropper than traditional practices. The law was primarily a response to absentee landlordism in Central Thailand, but, in theory, it applies throughout the country. However, as Muun points out in lines 1-6, this is not local practice in the area (or indeed, as he mentions a bit earlier, in most of Northern Thailand). Nevertheless, Kææw does have the right to demand division according to the law. To enforce such a demand, he would need to have a government official come to preside over the division. Today (when they are having this conversation) is a Sunday and the government offices are closed. Thus, in saying "Tomorrow we will divide," Kææw is threatening to call on the government's authority to enforce a division according

to the law. This is recognized in Muun's response in lines 26-7. In this exchange, Kææw is invoking contextual knowledge. Although that knowledge is not available directly from the transcript, we can see that it is in play; lines 22-5 are, to the uninformed reader, puzzling and so point to some knowledge which is available to the participants. Thus, by Schegloff's standards (as I understand them), this contextual knowledge is demonstrably relevant. Without this liberal notion of context, the requirement of relevance is too constraining for ethnographic purposes. And, since the context is procedurally consequential, for CA purposes as well.

However, lines 11-20 present another kind of problem, specifically as regards the meaning of line 17, "They don't calculate." The naïve reader might suppose that this means that the sharecropper and owner divide the rice roughly in half. There is nothing in the exchange to indicate otherwise. There is no visible invocation of further, unstated knowledge of customary practice. In fact, though, division in half is carefully calculated. What is meant here is that they don't calculate according to the law. The context is relevant, but this is not demonstrable from the transcript. Instead, it requires further ethnographic knowledge of cultural practice.

My point here is that contextual knowledge may be in play without its being demonstrably relevant from a reading of the transcript or a seeing/hearing of the interaction itself. Here is another example, from a club meeting among Black ghetto teenagers:

(5) Labov (1972)

Rel: Shut up please!

Stanley: 'ey, you tellin' me? ((Stanley stretches his arm out toward Rel.))

Rel: Yes.

Stanley: Come a li'l closer.

Rel: Your mother's a duck. Get outa here.

Stanley: Come a li'l closer an' say-

Rel: Your mother's a duck. ((At this point, Stanley withdraws his arm, looks around, and becomes involved with someone else.))

This exchange might seem to make sense without specialized contextual knowledge. Stanley threatens Rel, who responds with an insult. Stanley is cowed and withdraws. However, if we are familiar with the institution of ritual insulting in the Black ghetto community, we will see that it is in fact Rel who has backed down by responding to Stanley's threat in a nonserious (not an insulting) way. Again, the transcript itself does not visibly call for such knowledge. The use of such knowledge, unmotivated by a reading of the transcript, seems to be precisely what Schegloff wishes to avoid. It seems to allow for a promiscuous invocation of context. It leads away from empirically grounded interpretation based on the actual, presentable evidence placed before us. And yet, failure to take such context into account will, in some cases, produce misunderstanding.

In general, though, I, as ethnographer, was inclined to accept the discipline of demonstrable relevance as a check on the potentially limitless and manipulable invocation of ethnographic context. Cases such as those presented in segments (4) and (5) seemed exceptional and would have to be dealt with in an exceptional manner. However, a consideration that I had to deal with in a recent paper (Bilmes 2009b) has added to the confusion.

Demonstrable relevance reconsidered

Here is the case in point: A Northern Thai villager named Taa is telling a story to my wife and myself about an occasion when he tried to get his son-in-law, who had been charged with desertion, freed from military jail and discharged from the Army. After being sent from one office to another, at each of which he paid a bribe, he went to the Army camp, where (apparently) he saw his son-in-law.

(6) Bilmes 2009b translated from Northern Thai

Taa: (I) entered the Army camp. *Oh, they arrested my child.* That is, my son-in-law.
They wanted three thousand ((3000 baht)).

There are at least two ways to interpret the words in italics. He may be quoting his thoughts at the time. A reasonable translation under this interpretation would be "Oh, they have arrested my child." Alternatively, he may, with "oh," be expressing his shock and then describing the situation that caused his upset. Under this interpretation, a better translation would be "Oh, they had arrested my child." In other words, he may, with that expression, be talking to himself or to his audience. Given the absence of tensing in Thai verbs, either translation is possible. In the actual occasion, however, there is no such ambiguity. To see this, we must take two further matters into account. The expression that he uses for "my child" is *luug kuu* (literally "child I"). *Kuu* is a vulgar form of the first person singular, and this is the only time in the narrative that he uses it. (Otherwise, he uses the standard polite form, *phom*, or the more relaxed *haw*.) The other relevant fact is that he was telling the story to my wife and myself. My wife, who is Thai, was clearly, in Thai terms, his status superior, and I myself, as a "wealthy" foreigner and a university professor, was accorded a certain degree of deference, even though he had known me since I was a graduate student and slept on a villager's floor.⁷¹ Taa would never, in addressing us, refer to himself with *kuu*. It was therefore clear that, in saying "They arrested my child," he was quoting his thoughts at the time. The use of *kuu* was a feature of how he talked to himself, not to us.

The point here is that the social context was crucial in interpreting his talk. But in what sense is that context demonstrably relevant? I cannot, from within the talk, show what interpretation was intended or made. I can only say that this is what the interpretation would have to be, this is how the potential ambiguity of the talk would have to be resolved.

⁷¹ This, no doubt, accounts for the fact that the villagers referred to me as "Jack," whereas they called my wife, who never lived in the village, "professor."

If my analysis is correct, there is a problem with the demonstrable relevance criterion as applied to ethnography. The ethnographer will want to understand the utterance as a native would understand it. But, is this a problem for CA as well? I am not sure.

It is certainly possible for the conversation analyst to simply ignore any interpretive question that is not resolvable under Schegloff's criteria. The criterion of demonstrable relevance seems particularly crucial in that it speaks to a general methodological problem. But, if a methodological stricture prevents one from pointing out to an uninformed reader what is, for the informed observer, plainly there, perhaps there are grounds for modifying the method. The problem is how to modify the criterion without falling back into the interpretational license that Schegloff was seeking to avoid. Here is a first try at an amended criterion:

A contextual feature may be brought into the analysis when: 1. it is demonstrably relevant to the talk under consideration, or 2. it explains a known participant understanding of that talk. The methods or criteria by which the participant understanding is "known" remain unspecified. In the case of Taa's use of *kuu*, my knowledge is a product on my understanding of villagers' behavior, based on protracted experience of village life.

Additional Considerations

I want to raise another matter, specifically for those with ethnographic intentions. Let us reconsider Taa's utterance quoted above.

(7) Bilmes 2009b translated from Northern Thai

Taa: (I) entered the Army camp. Oh, they arrested my child. That is, my son-in-law.
They wanted three thousand ((3000 baht)).

Having clarified the actual relationship (son-in-law), Taa goes on later in his narrative to refer to the person twice more as his child. Within the narrative, he does not

refer again to son-in-law. In an article that I wrote on this narrative (Bilmes 2009b), I discussed this metaphorical usage of "child," and I mentioned that, in village Thailand, the relation between father-in-law and son-in-law could become rather close because of post-marital residence and work arrangements. Furthermore, the actual Northern Thai kinship terminology, which differentiates wife's father from husband's father and wife's mother from husband's mother, is consistent with cultural practice in regard to residence and authority.

Given that my objective was to analyze the narrative and that the supplementary ethnographic material was not required by that analysis, one can ask (as I asked myself at the time of writing) whether I was justified in including those ethnographic observations. Was I imposing my own relevancies on the data? Was I being undisciplined? If I were writing about my own culture for members of my own culture, I probably would not find it necessary to include such detail. In this case, though, it seemed important to give the cultural context, although I confess that I am not sure how to justify myself in a principled way or how to offer guidelines to other practitioners. In fact, one of the advantages of close analysis of talk in doing ethnography is that it may point us to observations that we would otherwise overlook or at least not think to mention (Bilmes 2008).

I pointed out at the beginning of this paper that Schegloff's recommendations applied to CA and not necessarily to any other discipline or approach. He expands on this point in the following extract (1991:65):

It is one thing to be addressed to the understanding of talk-in-interaction as the object of inquiry, and to ask how references to social structure bear on it and might need or permit incorporation in it. It is quite another to be addressed to understanding distributional or institutional or social-structural features of social life, and to ask how talk-in-interaction figures in their social production. I have taken the former of these enterprises as the premise of my discussion. I

think the latter enterprise would benefit from analyzing talk by methods appropriate for the analysis of talk in its own right. But the latter enterprise can be understood as a development quite independent of the one concerned with the fundamental organization of talk-in-interaction—as a kind of extension of mainstream institutional sociology. In that regard, it could be quite free of the analytic constraints under which conversation analysis has developed. On the other hand, that enterprise, too, might find a quite fresh turning were it to respect the constraints on the study of talk-in-interaction in its own right.

The last sentence of this passage expresses (part of) the idea that is the motivation for this paper. Instead of focusing on social structure, though, I have discussed CA in relation to ethnography. My usage of "ethnography" includes social structural (and social organizational, for those who make the distinction) factors, relevant local circumstances and personal history, and also features of participant knowledge and practice that fall under the rubric of "culture."

Schegloff, in his discussions of context, appears to be talking exclusively about matters of social structure. It is not clear to me as to whether his criteria are to be applied to more "purely cultural" aspects, such as grammar, semantics, pragmatics, belief systems and other features of cultural knowledge and practice. But, then, the line between social structural and cultural (in the sense of a body of knowledge, competences, beliefs, attitudes, etc.) is not very clear. Schegloff, for instance, writes about the invocation of sex (i.e., male/female) in explaining interruptions (1997). But is sex a feature of the social structural or the cultural context, or both? My current understanding is that the

inclusion of any contextual feature, even the "purely cultural" ones, must be justified by a showing of relevance to, and consequentiality for, the talk at hand.⁷²

However, many aspects of language, pragmatics, social organization, etc. tend to go unmentioned (and unnoticed) in most conversation analytic studies. This is because most conversation analysis has been written by scholars who share the (more or less) same culture as the subjects of study and the reading audience (although this has been changing in recent years, with an increasing CA literature, published in English-language journals, on non-Western, particularly Asian, languages). That is, most studies in CA have relied on unexplicated resources, which are presumably available to readers by virtue of their cultural competence. Ethnographers, on the other hand, are generally writing for a readership that is not familiar with the language or culture under examination. They must supply the reader with a range of resources—cultural resources including, but not limited to, linguistic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic features—necessary for understanding the talk. Furthermore, having gone through the process of mastering, to some extent, another language and culture, they are less likely to restrict their interests to the organization of interactive talk. Despite these somewhat divergent interests, my conclusion is not that Schegloff's tenets are inapplicable to ethnography. I believe that they provide a necessary analytical discipline. I conclude, however, that ethnographers at least (and maybe also traditional conversation analysts) will need to use some modified version of the criteria proposed by Schegloff. In my discussion above, I hope to have provided some very provisional hints as to possible modifications.

⁷² Schegloff mentions that a reviewer "invoked on behalf of anthropology a cultural sense of 'context,' parallel to the invocation by sociologists of social-structural senses of 'context'" (1991: 67). Again, though, he does not make it clear as to whether he accepts such an equivalence.

Appendix 4: Federal Trade Commission footnote discussion

Oct. 7 XYZ Loan Company

(('B' = Ben, 'P' = Paula, 'M' = Mary, 'J' = Judy))

01. B: Uh:m (2) page twenty. (1.5) footnote twenty one?

02. (1.5)

03. M: Umhm:, (2.5)

04. B: I would: eh: (2) just put a big flag there and ask

05. Paula whether (.5) she r(h)eally w(h)ants to say

06. that. (1.5)

07. M: Okay

08. B: Carol Riley °had° said that we'd be sc:reaming at

09. 'er .hh hhh (2) That's where we say we- (.) we

10. don't (.) feel like we should enforce (.) two oh

11. two point five dee two. (1)

12. M: Ah: well Paula does want that in.

13. B: Paula does want that in?

14. J: Dat was Paula- I [mean it was uh:=

15. M: [Yeah

16. B: =(Put it at) (.) footnote (.) (to) to ask (.) tell

17. her that (.) [Ben wants to know if she really=

18. M: [Well

19. B: =wants it in there.

20. M: Paula want uh Paula's reasoning was that we don't

21. want to allege this as a violation but we have to

22. explain why we're not. (3) Ask her again okay.

23. (1)

24. B: I mean that's just (.8) that's exactly what (3.5)

25. we would scream and yell at. (.8)

26. B?: hhh .hh
27. M: But that's what (.) e- Paula said that if she's
28. gonna recommend changing the ECOA that's what she's
29. gonna take out.
30. B: puh (1.5) huh huh huh
31. ((about three seconds of laughter--Ben and one
32. other))
33. B: ALL RIGHT (.) okay [(I'm glad to) see=
34. M: [hhh ok(h)ay
35. B: =she's not closeminded (.) uh:m
36. ((quiet laughter for about six seconds--Ben,
37. and possibly one other))
38. B: °oh: go:d° (1)
39. ((Paula re-enters))
40. P: Did I hear my name?
41. B: ha ha
42. M: huh[huh huh
43. J. [Yeah (.) footnote twenty one: Ben wants to know
44. if you really want this in here and we said huhnhh
45. P?: What's this. (1)
46. B: Carol Riley footnote? (.8)
47. M: hhhuhhuh (1)
48. P: °here° (2) the footnote on why we're not suing 'em
49. for (.5)
50. J: for fail- for failing [to give the alimo- (.)=
51. P: [for giving the notice
52. J: =the notice
53. B: We're not enforcing this portion of Reg B because

54. we think it's bad public policy. (3.5)
55. P: Wellhhh (1)
56. B: Pau::la:, (1)
57. M: Shall we take it out? (1) and just not (.) address
58. the [issue
59. B: [If Ted didn't enforce everything he thought
60. was bad p(h)ublic p(h)olicy whe(h)re w(h)ould
61. (h)you b(h)e (1.5)
62. P: I was a little (.) I was concerned about that and
63. noted it (.) on line (1) because i- the way it ends
64. up reading is: (.) if they corrected it voluntarily
65. (.) there's no need to do anything about it now
66. which is the way Ted would like to handle
67. everything.
68. B: The way it (.) reads is this's bad public policy.
69. (.) ['s no reason to do it
70. ?: [(*)
71. P: Wait a minute.
72. M: Well then it's both of- I mean we hh It's two::
73. too:: [huhhuhhuhuh
74. B: [Yeah well I go- I get the (1) and they
75. corrected it huh? (.8)
76. M: We did (.) agree on those t(h)wo: theo(h)r(h)ies.
77. (1.5)
78. P: (What)
79. M: We did (.) I mean when we were talkin' about it we
80. agreed that (.) I mean those were the reasons.
81. (1.5) (How else do we explain why) we're not (.)

- 82. suing them for those violations and we are for
- 83. marital (.8) status questions. (4)
- 84. B: kay I- I would (.) you know just re- (.) remind you
- 85. that I think you oughta rearrange
- 86. ?: hh[hh
- 87. B: [discussion on signatures

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