**Interactional Ethnography: Studying the Discourse Practices of a Group**

**Ed 737-001/Ed 835-125**

**Fall 2001**

Mondays 1-4pm; 2225 SEB (Presentation Room)

Tuesdays 11-1pm; 2211 SEB (Multi Media Classroom #1)

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Office hours by appointment

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### Course objectives

In this seminar, students interested in researching how academic practices are taught and learned in classrooms or other instructional groups will

- learn about the particular methods of data collection and methodologies of data transcription and analysis used in an interactional ethnographic approach;
- practice collecting, transcribing and analyzing data using these methods and methodologies;
- complete their own ministudy of a classroom or group practice using discourse analysis of original video data; and
- learn how to write and present the study in a format suitable for a beginning scholar.

### Course description

The course will best serve students who are looking for a qualitative research approach which describes the meaningful interactions of a group. That could be students who are just beginning their course of study, who have yet to take an introductory qualitative methods course or an ethnography course, or who have yet to be involved in a qualitative research project, but who already have an interest in researching the discursive practices of groups like classrooms. Students who have experience in these areas will be able to pursue more complex understandings and make more advanced applications of the course material. And, students who are even further along in their programs, who, for example, may be on the threshold of their dissertations, will have the opportunity of applying this methodology to their research question(s) and design.

This course is designed to serve as a hands-on introduction to the research methods and methodologies of an ethnographic approach to discourse analysis. It will begin with an introduction to concepts and methods of these research approaches before focusing on interactional ethnography (IE), which combines particular aspects of ethnographic research and discourse analysis to study the practices of a group. Grounded in sociolinguistics, ethnomethodology, and cognitive and cultural anthropology, IE is well suited for studying the sociocultural practices of a newly constructed group culture like a classroom, a study group, or a professional development community. The method makes
it possible to investigate the meanings the group’s practices have for their members, and how particular meaningful practices were constructed over time in their day to day discourse. These techniques are especially useful for exploring, describing, and understanding complex interactional dynamics such as teaching and learning.

Using the IE research approach, class members will explore relationships between the talk that goes on in a classroom, its teaching and learning activity, and the members’ construction of knowledge and performance. They will do so by 1) practicing the method and methodology of IE using classroom video data; by 2) reading and discussing interactional ethnographic studies of school teaching and learning practices to examine how studies using the approach are conducted, organized, theoretically conceived, and written; by 3) reading and discussing two books and assorted articles explaining related methods and methodologies; and by 4) conducting a mini-study at a site of their own selection by collecting, analyzing, transcribing and reporting classroom discourse.

Course activities are predicated on the assumption that this research approach is dialogic, interpretive, and interactional in nature and best learned as a collaborative enterprise. Therefore, other than whole class discussions, activities will be carried out in small study groups whose membership will sustain for the duration of the course. For their mini-studies, with members of their study group, students may choose to share a research site or have their own.

The organization of the course
We will meet for seminar on Mondays from 1-4pm in the Presentation Room to discuss the readings and practice transcription and analysis. On Tuesdays we will meet for a two-hour lab from 10am to noon (also in SEB 2211). Lab time is set aside for study groups to meet and work on their in-progress mini-studies with the instructor in attendance to render assistance. I will also be available through individual appointments to confer with students about their projects.

The course focuses on video recording as the method for collecting classroom discourse data. Consequently, the lab will be held in Multimedia classroom #1 (2211 SEB) where video viewing and transcribing terminals are available. Class time will be dedicated to providing opportunities for seminar members to understand what they need to know in order to validly and ethically conduct and complete their own study using an ethnographic discourse analytic approach. They will discuss the research designs, questions, methods, and analyses of published studies using this approach; they will practice methods of analysis and transcription using prerecorded as well as their own data; and, they will receive responses from the instructor and colleagues on their emerging analyses of their own data and their in-process representations of their studies. Toward the end of term, we will focus on how students can write up and revise their reports of their research projects.

The course is structured to support the members’ development as emerging researchers. In addition to attending all seminars and labs, engaging in pedagogical activity, and designing and conducting a mini-study, toward the end of the course each class member

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Interactional Ethnography
Rex, Fall 2001

will present a verbal summative in-progress report of his/her mini-research project. At the end of the course, each one will write a study report suited to his/her stage as an emerging scholar.

**Access to support technology**
The course relies for its effectiveness upon a number of technological resources, which the School of Education will provide. Students do not need to supply any technological equipment of their own to participate fully in the course. However, students are advised that resources will be shared. To increase the possibility of having the equipment when it is needed, please plan for its use, reserve it well in advance of use, and do so in a spirit of cooperation and collaboration.

A demo copy of vPrism, a software for digital data discourse transcription will be made available for each student. However, this software is not necessary for the course.

IRIS has available five digital cameras, tripods, and tapes students may borrow to record additional data. In addition to operating manuals, IRIS staff, under the supervision of Michael Dunn, are available to provide technical support for the effective use of the equipment.

Video terminals for analyzing data outside of class time are available in IRIS and at the instructor’s station in MMC1 2211 SEB. IRIS is open for drop in use during its normal hours of operation. The MMC1 schedule of use can be viewed at mmc.soe.umich.edu.

**Readings**

*Required:* Please acquire *Language Shock* (Agar) and *Working with Spoken Discourse* (Cameron) to begin reading immediately.

*Language Shock. Understanding the culture of conversation* is currently on sale for $12 at http://www.amazon.com

*Working with spoken discourse* is so new it is only available from the publisher at www.sagepub.com (for $27.95)

Please obtain and copy the master version of the course packet of additional readings from me in my office, SEB 2022.

*Optional: (will be on reserve in IRIS)*
A binder of sample transcripts
The vPrism demo CD
Proposed Course Schedule (8/29/01)

The following course plan is designed for students who want to do classroom research and who are brand new to research and/or to interactional ethnography. It provides a sequence of interrelated activities for learning key concepts and methods of this approach. Readings, hands-on analysis of data, and students' field mini-studies converge to immerse students in a researching experience. The final goal is for students to explain their research studies in spoken and written presentations suitable to their roles as beginning researchers.

While these presentations are not intended for delivery at professional conferences or for publication in scholarly journals, they are meant to point students in those future directions. To that end, the schedule of seminar events and related reading and research activities has been planned to make effective use of time. The schedule and plan will be adjusted as is advisable to accommodate differences among student experiences effecting their achievement of the goal. For example, adjustments will be made for students' who have prior experiences with elements of this approach, for particular student career and research goals, and when field issues develop during students' mini-studies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Seminar activities</th>
<th>Research activity</th>
<th>Homework readings &amp; writings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. 9/10</td>
<td>Introduction of course and members Simulated research activity to raise the question: How can we understand the practices of a culture through studying its discourse? Learning to use digital video</td>
<td>Locate group to study Complete and submit IRB forms Negotiate access Schedule taping Schedule camera loan at IRIS</td>
<td>READ: Language Shock pp1-140 (plus notes) Working with Spoken Discourse pp1-30. Gee Lankshear WRITE: -Draft your research question(s) -Summarize a designated reading and its relationship to your research question(s)/interest (email to class members)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. 9/17</td>
<td>Readings discussion: What can be studied using an ethnographic and discourse analytic approach and how is it studied? Shaping a question and designing a study for which a combined ethnographic and discourse approach is useful.</td>
<td>Observe study site Shape study's orienting question and design suited to video data collection and analysis</td>
<td>READ: Language Shock pp141-258 (plus notes) Working with Spoken Discourse pp145-192 Rex (1999) WRITE: Draft your research question(s) Summarize a designated reading and its relationship to your research question/interest (email to class members)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. 9/24</td>
<td>Readings discussion: What can working with spoken discourse show us about a group culture? Shaping a question and designing a study for which a combined ethnographic and discourse is a useful approach.</td>
<td>Observe study site Shape study's orienting question and design suited to video data collection and analysis</td>
<td>READ: Working with Spoken Discourse pp 47-86 Rex (2001) WRITE: Draft your research question(s) Summarize a designated reading and its relationship to your research question/interest (email to class members)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Readings Discussion</td>
<td>Analysis of Data</td>
<td>Continue with Access, Planning, Scheduling, and Design Issues</td>
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<td>4. 10/1</td>
<td>Readings discussion: What do understanding speech events through an ethnography of speaking approach and speaking as doing through a pragmatic approach contribute to understanding group culture? Analysis of classroom video data: What's happening? What can we know? How do we know?</td>
<td>Continue with access, planning, scheduling, and design issues.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. 10/8</td>
<td>Readings discussion: What do understanding turn-taking through a conversational analysis approach and contextualization cues through an interactional sociolinguistic approach contribute to understanding group culture? Transcription</td>
<td>Begin collecting data if not yet underway</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. 10/15</td>
<td>Readings discussion: What does understanding methods of transcription contribute to understanding group culture? Analysis of data: How do we represent what's happening? Structuration mapping.</td>
<td>Collect, transcribe and analyze data</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. 10/22</td>
<td>Readings discussion: What does a critical discourse analysis approach contribute to understanding group culture? Analysis of data: How do we represent what's happening? Event mapping.</td>
<td>Collect, transcribe and analyze data</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. 10/29</td>
<td>Readings discussion: How does an interactional ethnographic approach observe and represent moment-to-moment and over time construction of social phenomena? Analysis of data: How do we represent what's happening? Message unit transcription.</td>
<td>Complete collection of data and begin transcription if not underway</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. 11/5</td>
<td>Readings discussion: As appropriate Recap transcription and analysis methods and methodology</td>
<td>Transcribe and analyze data</td>
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Interactional Ethnography  
Rex, Fall 2001
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10. 11/12</td>
<td>Present study in progress for feedback by seminar members.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. 11/19</td>
<td>Present study in progress for feedback by seminar members.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. 11/26</td>
<td>Reading Discussion: How do IE studies represent their findings for publication? Rhetorical analysis of article Draft write up of mini-study READ: Student paper examples: e.g., Miletta, Wu, Cutter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. 12/3</td>
<td>Responding to paper drafts Draft write up of mini-study Make appointment to meet with Lesley about your finished paper.</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. 12/10</td>
<td>Responding to paper drafts Complete study paper Email your paper to Lesley at least two days before your meeting.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12/17th 12/21</td>
<td>Meet with Lesley to discuss her response to your paper.</td>
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Course Packet Readings


Rex, L. A. (1999). “If anything is odd, inappropriate, confusing, or boring, it's probably important”: The emergence of inclusive academic literacy through English classroom discussion practices. Research in the Teaching of English. 34, 66-130.


Miletta, Andra, Establishing a moral climate through modes of communication: An experienced teacher in a new school setting.

Wu, Hsin Kai, Connecting the microscopic view of chemistry to real life experiences

Cutter, Jayne, Supporting inclusion in challenging science curricular contexts: Opportunities to learn for general educators through case-based vignette conversations