# The Systematic Analyses of Layered Meanings Inscribed in Interview Conversations: An Interactional Ethnographic Perspective and Its Conceptual Foundations

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**Abstract.** *In this paper, I provide an overview of foundational sociolinguistic, critical discourse, and languacultural concepts that guide the ways interviews are conceptualized and analyzed as dynamic conversations. Interactional Ethnographic principles are introduced and then applied to the analysis of a rich point that occurred in an interview with a Lithuanian teacher of English. Analyses of the teacher's account of her paskyrimas to a school where she worked for 32 years revealed the importance of using systematic analyses at multiple levels of scale to uncover the layers of meaning inscribed in the interview discourse. In demonstrating how my conceptual and epistemological lenses shape my analyses, I also contribute to the calls to make research more transparent and claims more grounded in analyzed evidence.*

**Keyword**s: *interview, interactional ethnography, discourse analysis, transparency, qualitative research.*

Ethnographers have used formal and informal interview conversations with participants since the beginnings of ethnographic studies that examined how people create and represent cultural meanings within social groups. As interviews have become one of the dominant methods for generating insights about people's lives and experiences within and beyond ethnographic studies, scholars (Brinkman & Kvale 2015; Roulston 2010; Skukauskaite 2012) have emphasized the need to make transparent the epistemological, theoretical and methodological frameworks guiding interview studies. In addressing this call, in this paper, I provide an overview of the con- ceptual foundations that help uncover the layered meanings of interview conversations. I present the early conceptual work in sociolinguistics, critical discourse-analysis, and *languaculture* to make visible the theoretical foundations of the Interactional Ethnographic (IE) perspective I have adopted for my study of interview conversations. I then present four IE principles that guide the analyses of an interview excerpt offered in the last part of the paper. I conclude the paper with an argument for transparency about theories and epistemologies that guide our knowledge construction about people's meanings and lives in context.

## Historical and Conceptual Foundations for Researching Interview Conversations

To learn about people's perspectives, life-worlds and cultures, it is not enough to observe their actions. Paying attention to their language and how language is used can help researchers understand the ways in which people construct and represent their realities. Spradley (1979), one of the first scholars to write a methodological text on ethnographic interviewing, argued that because "both tacit and explicit culture are revealed through speech" (p. 9), talking with the people and actively listening to what they say and how they say it can provide researchers with opportunities to delve into deeper understandings of insider perspectives than those available through observation alone (Brinkman 2013; Brinkman & Kvale 2015). Kvale (2007) argued that because conversations are "a basic mode of human interaction" (p. 1), interviews enable learning from and with people. Spradley (1979) compared interviews to "friendly conversations," delineating differences between the two, while arguing that interviews help ethnographers understand people's cultural meanings.

While there has been a proliferation of literature on interviewing (Brinkman & Kvale 2015; Gubrium, Holstein, Marvasti & McKinney 2012; Kvale 1996), especially since Briggs' (1986) and Mishler's (1986) seminal volumes, Spradley's (1979) text, reissued in 2016, is still one of the earliest and most theoretically and methodologically explicit expositions of the ways of conceptualizing, conducting, analyzing and representing interviews. Much of the interview literature draws on sociology and other social sciences, while Spradley, like Mishler (1984; 1986) and Briggs (1986), makes visible the importance of language and sociolinguistics in understanding how knowledge is co-constructed in and through the interviews. Language-based perspectives often remain invisible in qualitative and ethnographic studies despite their significant contributions to education and research methodology (Skukauskaite, Rangel, Rodriguez & Ramon 2015).

### *Sociolinguistic Foundations*

Drawing on the work of Hymes (1974) in sociolinguistics, Spradley viewed interviews as specific kinds of speech events that invoke particular norms and expectations for the participants. Atkinson and Silverman (1997) referred to this familiarity and expectations of interviewing within society as "interview society," a term that has been widely taken up to demonstrate the ubiquity, complexity and taken-for-granted assumptions of interviewing (Gubrium et al. 2012). Few, however, made visible how the assumptions of interviewing by the interview society shape what takes place in the interview.

Gumperz and Hymes (1972), two of the founders of sociolinguistics, argued that a conversation, including an interview, is "directly governed by the rules or norms for the use of speech" (Hymes 1972, p. 56). In a conversation, speakers and listeners actively choose ways of talking and of interpreting what they hear and, as Bakthin (1979/1986) argued, speak with an implicated hearer. What occurs in

an interview is influenced by the norms and expectations participants bring to the speech event; however, the rules for participation are not fixed and can be renegotiated *in situ*. Gumperz (1972) argued that people use *linguistic repertoires*, including norms for participation, language and background information in creative ways to achieve particular communicative intent and to meet the demands of the conversation at hand:

> Communication is not governed by fixed social rules; it is a two-step process in which the speaker first takes in stimuli from the outside environment, evaluating and self-selecting from among them in the light of his own cultural background, personal history, and what he knows about his interlocutors. He then decides on the norms that apply to the situation at hand. These norms determine the speaker's selection from among the communicative options available for encoding his intent (p. 15).

The choices people make within a conversation are influenced not only by the immediate event and location in which the interview takes place but also by the cultural, historical and social patterns of the communities in which people live and construct meanings (Gumperz 1972; 1982; 1995). Therefore, to understand the meanings people construct in and through conversations, researchers need to examine not only *what* is said, but also *how* it is said and how the interactions of *what* and *how* signal particular meanings and criteria for interpretation. Even though interview researchers have called for more examinations of the *how* (Holstein & Gubrium 2003), few analyses reveal the cues researchers use for interpreting the meanings (the *whats*).

Gumperz proposed the concept of contextualization cues as a way to systematically examine *how* people construct meanings. He argued that people purposefully contextualize their messages and intent; thus, the same words may have varied meanings, depending on how they are expressed in a particular situation. According to Gumperz (1992; 1995), conversational inference is dependent on linguistic and cultural knowledge and backgrounds of interlocutors. This cultural knowledge and background is signaled in conversation through *contextualization cues*, which evoke "interpretive frames in terms of which constituent messages are interpreted" (Gumperz 1995, p. 104). *Contextualization cues* (Gumperz 1982; 1992) are prosodic and other nonverbal and verbal signs (e.g., pauses, pitch, tone, self-corrections, gestures) that signal communicative meaning and intent. Through such cues, people construct messages that are heard and interpreted in particular ways moment by moment and overtime in the conversation as well as in the later interpretations of the conversation.

Building on the concept of contextualization cues, Green and Wallat (1981) proposed message units as units of analysis that act as building blocks to understand how meanings in interaction are accomplished message by message and how those messages tie to construct grounded interpretive frames. Message units (MUs) are bursts of speech uttered by a speaker and heard by a listener in a conversation. MUs can be determined by examining the discourse and contextualization cues conversation partners use to signal meanings in order to actively participate in the con-

versation. MU transcription and analysis provides a grounded way for interpreting *how* meaning in interaction is actively constructed moment by moment and over time (Green & Wallat 1981; Skukauskaite 2012).

From these theoretical perspectives, interview conversations can be seen as speech events in which participants actively co-construct meanings through their linguistic and contextual choices. Furthermore, interviews are also located in the larger social, political, economic and interpersonal contexts shaping knowledge construction. However, unless analyzed explicitly, these contexts can be taken for granted. To uncover what is taken for granted and how people construct their realities, critical discourse analysts argued that the societal contexts need to be taken into account.

### Critical Discourse Analysis Foundations

Critical Discourse analysts Fairclough (1995), van Dijk (1993) and others argued that the analysis of what people say and how they say it within a particular societal context can shed light on how people view themselves, others, and their acts in the world. Drawing on the work of Fairclough and Halliday, Ivanič (1994) proposed the notion of *discursive choices* as ways to understand how the language people use in communication signals particular social and ideological layers of meaning. She argued that writers and speakers make particular discursive choices that communicate both the "ideational meaning" (Halliday 1985) or the content, and the "interpersonal meaning." Interpersonal meaning, according to Fairclough (1992), consists of two interrelated components: "the representation of social relations and the representation of social identities" (Ivanič 1994, p. 4). Consequently, discursive choices, according to Ivanič (1994), refer to:

a) The physical language they wrote on the page: its content, sequencing and wording;

b) The fact that they wrote it this way as a result of mainly unconscious decisions based on the actual context in which they were writing, particularly their anticipation of how their actual readers would respond;

c) The fact that these unconscious choices were being made from a range of discourses which were available in the sociocultural context (p. 5).

Ivanič makes explicit the idea that (1) people in communicative events, such as writing or conversation, make choices of what and how to say or write and that (2) those choices are influenced by multiple contextual layers of people's lives.

Based on the perspectives introduced above, to understand the meanings co-constructed in interview conversations, it is imperative to focus on discourse or language-in-use (Bloome & Clark 2006) through which people signal meanings to each other. Agar's (1994) concept of *languaculture*, presented in the next section, draws on these discourse-based perspectives to show how interaction among two people is an interaction among discourse- and cultural- frames, which can clash and create opportunities for understanding the *languacultures* at play.

### Languacultural Foundations

Most definitions of ethnography state that ethnography studies culture; however, as Agar demonstrates, both ethnography (Agar 2006b) and culture (Agar 2006a) have become terms that are as contentious as they are ubiquitous. Agar (1994; 2006a) proposes viewing culture as relational and dynamic, rather than a defined system tied to a specific location or group. He poses the idea of *languacultures*, which encompass linguistic, historical, social and other aspects of everyday life people construct and use in creating and sharing meanings for their lives.

Agar (1994) views language as action, inseparable from the situations in which it is used: "Language was a means of practical action, and the way you understood a piece of language was to understand the situation it occurred in and the action it accomplished" (p. 92–93). He (1994) states: "[t]he *langua* in *languaculture* is about discourse, not just about words and sentences. And the *culture* in languaculture is about meanings that include, but go well beyond, what the dictionary and the grammar offer" (p. 96). From this perspective, language is saturated with culture and culture is constructed and represented through language. Therefore, an ethnographer seeking to understand *languacultural* patterns needs to examine *how* words mean, how they are used in context and how discourse creates and represents cultural meanings. Those *languacultural* meanings in use are dynamic, context specific and often invisible not only to outsiders but to insiders as well.

*Languacultures* become visible when an interaction between people, often an insider and an outsider, creates a *frame clash*, or a moment in communication where expectations are broken for at least one of the participants (Goffman 1974). A frame clash has the potential to be abandoned, to create a conflict or to remain unresolved, whereas taking action to learn from the clash opens doors to new insights. Agar calls this learning action resulting from a frame clash a "rich point" (Agar 1994), which has the potential to uncover the frames underlying the researcher's and the participant's views of their realities and themselves. Rich points enable researchers to build bridges among the *languacultural* understandings created within and across moments of communication. In examining discursive choices and cultural frames guiding communication, the researcher has a potential to get closer to the insider perspectives, which may remain obscured in observed actions alone.

The ideas of *languaculture* and of rich points as opportunities for learning about people's perspectives signal the importance of examining discourse in contexts of its use. While not all ethnographies include discourse analyses, in my work, I have adopted an Interactional Ethnographic perspective that enables me to examine both what meanings are constructed and how those meanings are talked-into-being through the discursive and *languacultural* choices of interview participants.

### Interactional Ethnographic Principles: Constructing Layered Understandings Through the Focus on Discourse in Context

Interactional Ethnography (IE) draws on sociolinguistics, critical discourse analysis and practice-oriented theories of culture (Green, Skukauskaite & Baker 2012) to

systematically examine how members of *languacultural* groups discursively construct patterns of interaction and meanings for their social worlds. Drawing on Heath (1982) and Agar (2006b), Green, Skukauskaite and Baker (Green et al. 2012) identified four ethnographic principles encompassed within an Interactional Ethnographic perspective: 1) Ethnography as a nonlinear system; 2) Leaving aside ethnocentrism; 3) Identifying boundaries of what is happening; 4) Making connections among interactions within and across events, situations and contexts.

First, ethnography is nonlinear, and ethnographic work involves abductive logic as an open analytic system through which the researcher examines multiple perspectives at multiple points in time, folding new insights into developing understandings while letting go of explanations that do not sustain careful empirical investigations. Rich points, which may occur at any moment in an ethnographic study, serve as anchors for backward and forward mapping (Dixon & Green 2005) to develop understandings of the *languacultures* underlying the frame clash. In this way, the researcher examines "historical and future pathways (roots and routes) to uncover insider knowledge through iterative actions and recursive logic" (Green et al. 2012, p. 311). Examining these pathways involves analyses of multiple perspectives the insiders and the researcher inscribe in their communication as well as analyses of multiple information sources that can be used to develop a holistic understanding of the *languacultures* in interaction.

Second, the search for a holistic understanding through an abductive logic-in-use is guided by the ethnographic principle to

set aside the researcher's ethnocentric views (Heath 1982) and focus on understanding participant emic understandings through discourse and actions in context. By identifying insider terms, analyzing actions implied in verbs, drawing connections among the discursive choices and examining interactional accomplishment overtime (Green et al. 2012), ethnographers make visible how *what* people say and *how* they say it carry *languacultural* meanings. This view of discourse-as-meaning-laden-action is predicated on the view that people are active agents in constructing their social realities and that they signal meanings to each other as they interact. Bloome and Egan-Robertson (1993) argued that to understand the social construction of meaning, a researcher needs to analyze how participants draw on immediate and past events to propose, acknowledge, recognize as significant and socially accomplish particular meanings, norms, expectations, roles and relationships at specific moments in time and over time.

While ethnographers seek to understand and represent *languacultures* and the processes of their construction in as much detail as possible, they are also aware that *languacultures* are dynamic, shift over time and that no matter the extent of time an ethnographer spends interacting with members of a social group, there will always be limits to certainty (Baker & Green 2007). One way of building trustworthy empirical explanations involves using the third ethnographic principle of "identifying boundaries of events" (Green et al. 2012, p. 313) and thus making transparent the scope of analyses to uncover particular plural truths-in-the-moment, not a universal single "Truth" about the social group or a person's perspective. An ethnographer also

needs to account for how the records were inscribed, transcribed (Skukauskaite 2012; 2014), archived, and selected for analyses (Baker, Green & Skukauskaite 2008), what perspectives guided the analyses, and how the researcher accounted for contextual factors influencing construction of meaning from the ethnographic records. From this perspective, records are not data, as data are constructed by the researcher making particular decisions, identifying particular boundaries and using particular theoretical perspectives to answer specific research questions. Therefore, the transparency of boundaries identified and the decisions made by the researcher are critical in constructing a grounded ethnographic account of *languacultural* meanings and actions.

The fourth ethnographic principle of building connections (Green et al. 2012) emphasizes the importance of considering multiple layers of contexts when entering, engaging in and writing about the *languacultural* meanings of the participants. Building connections involves examining and accounting for larger contexts, such as sociopolitical systems, economic environments, societal changes and policies, as well as local contexts, such as interpersonal relations, events or resources impacting people's lives. An ethnographer needs to search for relevant literature and materials that can help provide contextual information for the interpretations of insiders' discursive choices and *languacultural* actions. These contextual factors may be at the peripheries of insider vision or invisible in their everyday lives. The focus on discourse enables the researcher to trace back the historical and contextual roots as well as to identify the routes through which participant *languacultures* are constructed.

The four ethnographic principles provide a systematic way of examining the discourse, actions and interactions through which people co-construct and (re)present their social worlds for themselves and others. These principles can be used in both full-scale ethnographies and in studies that adopt an ethnographic perspective but do not constitute a full ethnography. In the next section, I demonstrate how the four principles enabled me to uncover multiple meanings embedded in an interview conversation.

## Applying an Interactional Ethnographic Perspective to Uncover Languacultural Meanings Inscribed in an Interview: The Case of *Paskyrimas*

The example in this section is from a study in which I interviewed nine Lithuanian teachers of English-as-a-foreign-language to understand their experiences of teaching within a rapidly changing educational system (Skukauskaite 2006). The study did not include longitudinal participant observation of teachers in schools but relied on teacher-focused interviewing. Adopting an interactional ethnographic perspective for this study was a result of realizing that the conversations interview participants and I co-constructed were far richer than what I had initially designed. The decisions to pay attention to the discourse, the sociocultural contexts and to follow participant leads rather than follow the interview guide I had prepared were precipitated by a series of frame clashes that occurred at the beginning of the interview, some of which I explored in previous publications (Skukauskaite 2006). For this study, I chose a frame clash that

revolved around one discursive choice – *gavau paskyrimą* – which inscribed multiple layers of meanings and contexts. I first present a discourse analysis, demonstrating how the teacher's contextualization cues inscribe layers of significance for this phrase. I then discuss the sociohistorical context that situates the teachers' expression and her representation of herself and her work in larger sociocultural contexts.

### Discursive Construction of the Paskyrimas and its Significance for Danutė

The excerpt analyzed here occurred early in the interview. After I asked the teacher (her pseudonym – Danutė) to tell me about her current work, she began narrating how she became an English language teacher. Her shift to the past and the early history of teaching posed a frame clash for me, but I made a decision to follow her lead and listen rather than redirect her back to my intent for the interview. After Danutė described her early influences, personal characteristics and the decision to study English, she shared how she came to be at the school where she had been teaching for the past 32 years: she finished one of the top universities in the country and received a good placement in a good school in a large city because she was among the top graduating students. In Table No. 1, I include Danutė's narration about this placement (*paskyrimas*) in the original Lithuanian language, which was used for analyses of contextualization cues in Danutė's discursive choices. In the English translation, I tried to remain as close as possible to the structures of the Lithuanian expressions. The transcript is in message unit format, adapted from Green & Wallat (1981).

**Table No. 1.** *The analysis of the discursive construction of the importance of "paskyrimas."*

| MU | Danutė | A | Danutė | A | Contextualization cues and their signaled meanings |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | baigiau A universitetą: | | I finished A university | | *intonation rises on the name of the university; a: elongated, holding the turn* |
| 2 | septyniasdešimt [xxx]ais mEtais | | in 197(xx) | | *mEtais – E is high pitched, intonation falls on metais but not a full stop, signaling that more is coming; However, she pauses after mentioning the year, thus adding an emphasis* |
| 3 | ir ir ir | | and and and | | *Repeated "and" – holding the turn, signaling active thinking for the next message* |
| 4 | kadangi buvau reiškia: | | because I was I mean | | *a: in reiškia: extended* |
| 5 | geresnių | | among the better | | *ų stressed, slight pause, pitch low* |
| 6 | mokinių sąraše | | students' list | | *pitch rises on sąraše, są stressed, slight pause* |
| 7 | at the top | | at the top | | *short "o", staccato, pause, intonation falls but still hanging* |

*Table No. 1* (continuation). *The analysis of the discursive construction of the importance of "paskyrimas."*

| MU | Danutė | A | Danutė | A | Contextualization cues and their signaled meanings |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 8 | | uhu | | uhu | *Latched, as Danutė pauses and continues* |
| 9 | ta:i | | so | | *slow, a: extended* |
| 10 | gavau paskyrimą | | I received a placement | | *pause at the end of the message, intonation hangs* |
| 11 | palyginti tais laikais labai gerą | | comparatively very good for those times | | *"labai gerą" emphatic, stressed* |
| 12 | į [B miestą] | | to [B named] city | | *slower, name of the city emphasized, said with emotion- pride-like* |
| 13 | | uhu | | uhu | |
| 14 | tai kiti jau važiuodavo į rajonus | | so others went to the regions | | *falling intonation* |
| 15 | o aš jau gavau gerą paskyrimą | | but I received a good placement | | *repeating the same phrase "paskyrimą"* |
| 16 | nes buvau šeštoji pagal tą eilę | | because I was 6th in that line | | *intonation falls on "šeštoji" but slightly goes up on "eilę" - phrase hangs at the end, pause* |
| 17 | ii | | annn | | *vocal breath out, in in the pause* |
| 18 | na ir ir | | so and and | | *intonation shifts/starts anew* |
| 19 | ir dar girdėjau | | and I also heard | | *volume goes up, intonation goes up* |
| 20 | kad paskui iš mokyklos | | that later from a school | | *intonation falls but hangs* |
| 21 | [mindaugo] to- | | [mindaugas] that- | | *Name of the school aborted, self corrected* |
| 22 | [algirdo] vidurinės mokyklos | | [algirdas] secondary school | | *faster, intonation falling* |
| 23 | reiškia pavaduotojas važiavo į universitetą pasiriNkti | | I mean a vice prin-cipal went to the university to choose | | *"pasirINkti" emphasized, intonation falls at the end* |
| 24 | gerų studentų | | good students | | *intonation falls* |
| 25 | ir buvau pasirinktA dar buktai | | and I was chosen I guess | | *"-ta" emphasized* |
| 26 | kaip jis vėliau man sakė | | as he told me later | | *intonation falls on "sake", full stop* |
| 27 | nu va | | so that's that | | *intonation shifts, pace quickens* |
| 28 | tai šitoj mokykloj jau dirbu | | in this school I work | | *volume up, pause after dirbu* |
| 29 | trišdešimt du metai | | 32 years | | *32 slowly, metai emphasized, intonation falls – full stop* |
| 30 | trišdešimt du mEtai | | 32 years | | *mEtai stressed, intonation rises on E and falls on ai* |

The 30 message units (MUs) in this table represent Danutė's explanation of how she came to be at the school where she has worked for the past 32 years. For the purposes of this paper, I divided the 30 MUs into five informational segments through which she constructs the importance of the placement to the B city she names (for the full 7-level analytic system, see Skukauskaite 2006). In the first segment, MU 1–2, Danutė states which university she finished in which year. This information may look as mere background, if only the content were analyzed. However, focusing on contextualization cues, I noted that Danutė's purposeful intonational patterns inscribe a significance both for the name of the university and the date, to be explained further in the next section.

The next segment, MU 3–13, consists of two related informational units, bounded by my latched "uhu" back-channeling during Danutė's pauses. At first, in MU 3–8, Danutė introduces "the list" and positions herself among the best students, but the lower pitch, emphasized syllable "są" of the word "list" and the pauses signal her modesty about this achievement. However, the modesty is repudiated when she utters "at the top" in English, in a quick, normal pitch, staccato tempo. In the second informational unit, MU 9–13, Danutė introduces the notion of receiving a good placement (*paskyrimą*). Extended vowels, pause patterns, intonation and emoting during this segment marks Danutė's feeling of pride in her accomplishment. The use of the word "receive" in the context of the list of the best students also signals the idea that she has earned and was deserving of this placement in a large city and at a

good school and was not merely "receiving" it as some sort of favor.

In MU 14–16, the importance of this placement is further enhanced with Danutė's presentation of the contrast between her achievement and the placements of other students in villages. This contrast, along with her repeated emphasis on receiving a good *paskyrimą*, marks the placement as a key event in her journey as a teacher. The contextualization cues of rising and falling intonation in specifying the exact position, the 6th on the previously mentioned list of the best students, adds further significance to this event.

She further enhances the significance of the placement when she narrates about the school deputy director coming to the university to select the best students (MU 17–26). In this excerpt, Danutė particularly emphasizes his choice. In MU 17–24, she says he came to the university to choose good students, and the word to choose, *pasirinkti*, is emphasized, the IN in the middle of the word is stressed, said slower, with falling intonation making a small pause before uttering *gerų studentų*, thus creating emphasis on "choice." In MU 25, she repeats the word "choice," *pasirinkta,* now stated in passive voice, as being chosen. Again, the word ends with an intonational emphasis on the last syllable, *pasirinkTA*, making this word stand out in messages (MU 25–26) otherwise uttered faster than the previous utterances. The longer pause at the end of MU 26 marks the full stop and a potential shift to another idea.

In MU 27–30, Danutė states that she has worked in this school for the past 32 years. The pause after MU 28, the slow uttering of *trisdešimt du* (32), the emphasis

on the word *metai* (years) in MU 29 and a full stop at the end of MU 29 signal the importance of the time spent working at this school. But the additional repetition of 32 years with the emphasis again falling on the word *metai* indicates that it was not only the school, but the years spent at this one school that are significant to her. By ending the narrative of the placement with the emphasis on time, Danutė marks the placement as one of the most consequential events in her life as a teacher.

To understand why the placement is important, the discourse analysis is not sufficient; it must be tied to the whole of the interview and the multilayered contexts in which the interview conversation occurred. The interactional ethnographic perspective provides a systematic way to explore these multilayered contexts to gain deeper understandings of the teacher's discourse.

### Sociohistorical Exploration of the Importance of Paskyrimas: An Interactional Ethnographic Lens

To gain a deeper understanding of Danutė's perspective on the placement, I utilized the interactional ethnographic principles and their underlying theoretical lenses. The principles of (1) the nonlinearity of ethnography, (2) setting aside ethnocentrism, (3) exploring boundaries and (4) looking for connections enabled me to uncover the sociohistorical and professional significance of *paskyrimas*. In this section, I use the term *paskyrimas* solely in Lithuanian, since the term has layered sociohistorical meanings that are not embedded in the English use of "teacher placement." While in the original analyses I did not follow the four principles separately in a linear way, here I present their application, albeit briefly, to demonstrate the potential of the interactional ethnographic lens as an epistemological frame for knowledge construction.

The nonlinear and abductive nature of ethnographic logic enables the researcher to start analyses at any moment in data history, constructing a dataset around that moment. Frame clashes that mark surprises or puzzles for the researcher can become rich points that lead to uncovering *languacultural* meanings and actions. Danutė's emphasis on *paskyrimas* and her telling of the history of becoming a teacher was one of such puzzles for me. However, to make this clash into a rich point and to learn what was embedded in her emphasis, I had to analyze not only the discourse but also follow the referential pathways to uncover how and what the discourse meant in the larger sociopolitical contexts Danutė inscribed in her narrative when she marked the year.

To understand her perspective, I had to consider the historical and political context of teacher education in Lithuania. At the time I conducted the interview, teacher placement at the completion of the university degree did not differ significantly from processes in other European Union countries or the US. The teacher had a choice where she would get a teaching job. However, since Danutė explicitly specified her graduation year in the 1970s, I had to examine the meaning of *paskyrimas* through the historical lens. The 1970s was in the midst of the soviet era in Lithuania. A teacher graduating from the university was given a directive of where she would be

placed to teach. The placement depended, in part, on the teacher's university grades, the university reputation and certain special favors dependent on the teacher's or her family members' political associations. Consequently, Danutė's specification of the university, which was the best university in the country, her explanation of the list and her position as the 6th among the best students, as well as her emphasis on the deputy director making the choice to invite her, marks her *paskyrimas* as an accomplishment based on her merits rather than political affiliations or favors. The principle of non-linearity enabled me to explore the frame clash beyond the interview conversation itself, folding in the historical information to inform the rest of the analyses and subsequent interviews with other teachers.

The second principle of setting aside ethnocentrism was one I first used unconsciously when I conducted the interview, but its use became salient during analyses. When I asked Danutė to tell me about her work as a teacher in the present, she started by narrating her history, starting with her mother and secondary school, then proceeding to *paskyrimas* and the lenght of time teaching at this particular school. During the interview I chose to follow her lead instead of redirecting her to what my original question was – about the teacher's current work. During the analyses, I could have chosen the parts of the interview that directly addressed my intended research question, reporting the answers. However, the interactional ethnographic perspective held me accountable to the participant, within her sociocultural context. The principle of setting aside ethno-

centrism reminded me to follow her discursive choices in order to understand her meanings, rather than merely gain answers to the questions I asked. By doing so, I was able to understand the multilayered contexts of *paskyrimas* and of teaching more generally I would not have uncovered had I followed my own agenda.

The third principle of creating boundaries by following what participants mark as important led me to viewing the moment of the interview conversation and the meanings we co-constructed as situated within the time frame that included Danutė's youth, her early days as a teacher in the 1970s and her teaching histories during the Soviet and post-Soviet times. The *paskyrimas* and its historical significance became particularly important when, later in the interview, Danutė contrasted her important position and impact as a teacher during the Soviet times with the diminished influence and possibilities in the independent democratic Lithuania.

The fourth interactional ethnographic principle calls for examining connections within and beyond the moments of conversation. Examining the connections I uncovered by exploring the pathways from Danutė's presentation of *paskyrimas* is beyond the lenght possibilities of this paper and some have been analyzed in my previous work. To summarize, analyses of various parts of the interview and the interconnections among those parts led me to understand that uncovering participant meanings requires following their trains of thought and looking for connections across moments in the conversation. People do not talk in linear ways. To uncover the deeper meanings of any particular

story or event, it becomes necessary to look for echoes of the story in other parts of the interview as well as to seek connections to information beyond the interview event itself. The most important connections I uncovered in this interview occured in linking Danutė's discourse to the historical and political history as well as to other parts of the interview, in which she talked about her current tense relationships with the school administration, her limited possibilities for impact and her desire for more direct leadership that could provide support for teachers rather than automatically siding with the students.

The analysis of Danutė's inscription of *paskyrimas* using the four interactional ethnographic principles made visible how the discursive moments of the interview conversation carry layers of meanings that can be uncovered through using a particular epistemological lens in systematic ways. In this case, the merging of discourse analysis (the *interactional* part of Interactional Ethnography) with the ethnographic principles of understanding people's cultural meanings (the *ethnographic* part of IE) makes visible how *languacultural* meanings are co-constructed within an interview by the two people in conversation. To understand those *languacultural* meanings, the researcher needs to follow participant discursive choices to get closer to the contextualized understandings of what, how and why the participants choose to share with the interviewer. In this way, Interactional Ethnographic epistemology holds the researcher accountable to the participant in context as well as to the theoretical and disciplinary bases of the field.

## Conclusions

A variety of research approaches are available for examining how people construct their social worlds. Ethnography focuses on the study of cultural groups and the ways they create patterned ways of acting and interacting over time. When the focus of research is people's perspectives on particular aspects of their lives or experiences, other approaches and methods can be utilized, with or without the ethnographic perspective. Interviewing is often used as the method for generating data about people's meanings and views, yet interviewing is also criticized for making unsubstantiated claims, lacking theory or transparency in design (e.g., Atkinson & Coffey 2003; Brinkman 2013; Hammersley 2003; Roulston 2010). Since interviewing is here to stay, along with other researchers cited here, I argue that more transparency is needed about the disciplinary and conceptual frameworks guiding interview studies. I also argue that it is not enough to summarize the interview content, simply providing quotes and finding answers to research questions. Semi-structured, open-ended, in-depth, conversational and other forms of interviews in which the participants and the researcher co-construct a conversation entail *languacultural* meanings that can only be revealed by analyzing the multiple layers of meanings inscribed through the discursive choices of an interview conversation. Discourse analysis of language-in-use within and beyond the interview provides a way to understand the intersections of discursive choices and the cultural contexts shaping those choices within a particular interview. Multiple epistemological and theoretical

perspectives can be used to uncover these layers of meaning embedded in interviews, and in this paper, I presented one of such epistemological possibilities. The Interactional Ethnographic perspective, adopted as an epistemological framework for an interview-based study, enabled me to construct a systematic logic of analyzing layers of meanings shaping what and in what ways is co-constructed during an interview conversation. Systematic multilayered analyses, grounded in transparent epistemological frameworks, can enhance the knowledge we construct from interview studies, while keeping us accountable not only to our disciplines but also to our research participants, who gift us with their time and the sharing of their lives.

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# INTERVIU POKALBIUOSE ATSISPINDINČIŲ DAUGIASLUOKSNIŲ PRASMIŲ SISTEMINĖ ANALIZĖ: INTERAKCINĖS ETNOGRAFIJOS POŽIŪRIS IR JO KONCEPTUALŪS PAGRINDAI

**Audra Skukauskaitė**

S a n t r a u k a

Šio straipsnio pirmoje dalyje pateikiami sociolingvistiniai, kritinio diskurso analizės ir *langua* kultūros konceptų pagrindai, kuriais remiantis interviu konceptualizuojamas kaip pokalbis, kuriame tyrėjas ir dalyvis kartu kuria ne tik interviu pokalbio tematiką ir procesus, bet ir kontekstus, kurie tampa svarbūs daugialypėms interviu pokalbio reikšmėms atskleisti. Antroje straipsnio dalyje atskleidžiami keturi interakcinės etnografijos principai, padedantys sistemiškai analizuoti, kaip žmonės, gyvendami ir bendraudami tam tikroje aplinkoje ir *langua* kultūrinėje grupėje, diskursyviai formuoja tam tikrus požiūrius, veiksmus ir supratimą apie save, savo grupę ir juos supantį pasaulį. Pirmasis principas, etnografija kaip dinamiška, nelinijinė sistema, tyrėjui padeda susikoncentruoti į daugialypių požiūrių atskleidimą, dažnai analizę pradedant nuo kalbinio kultūrinio bendravimo išsiskiriančių svaros taškų (angl. *rich points*). Antrasis principas, etnocentrizmo atsisakymas, skatina etnografą pažvelgti į tiriamą grupę, reiškinį ar išsakomas mintis iš vietinių (insaiderių) esminės perspektyvos, kartu reflektyviai suprantant ir atidedant savo nuomones ir patirtis. Trečiasis principas, ribų pasirinkimas ir atskleidimas, skatina tyrimo skaidrumą ir tyrėjui primena, kad visi teoriniai, metodologiniai, technologiniai ir kiti pasirinkimai turi būti atskleisti, taip parodant tyrimo apimtį ir tos apimties įtaką pateikiant vienokius ar kitokius duomenimis grindžiamus argumentus. Ketvirtasis principas, ryšių paieška, skatina tyrėją remtis skirtingais duomenų šaltiniais, teorijomis, literatūra, metodais ir perspektyvomis bei ieškoti įvairios informacijos ryšio, taip pat neatitikčių. Šis principas taip pat primena, kad kalbinei kultūrai suprasti reikia atsižvelgti ir į įvairų kontekstą, kuriame žmonės gyvena, kalba ir kuria tam tikrą pasaulio, kultūros ir savęs bei savo veiksmų supratimą. Tie kontekstai gali būti nacionaliniai, instituciniai, globalūs, tarpasmeniniai, individualūs ir kt. Aprašius keturis interakcinės etnografijos principus, trečioje straipsnio dalyje pateikiamas pavyzdys, kuriame interviu pokalbio ištrauka apie mokytojos darbo paskyrimą į mokyklą, analizuojama dviem lygmenimis – diskurso analize ir interakcine etnografijos analize. Šia analize parodoma, kaip diskurso analizė, siejama su socioistoriniu, etnografiniu požiūriu paremta analize, padeda atskleisti daugialypes, interviu pokalbyje konstruotas, reikšmes ir tų reikšmių kontekstą. Straipsnyje taip pat pabrėžiama epistemologinio ir metodologinio skaidrumo svarba.