Series Editors' Preface

A number of years ago, one of us (AP) was on an interdisciplinary panel discussing aspects of medical communication. After the panel, we reflected on the apparently odd state of affairs where the 'linguist', who might have been expected to deal with close linguistic data – detailed analysis of some form of medical communication – instead looked at broad sociological and political matters to do with the global spread of English. Looking at Hong Kong (a case of a doctor omitting the word for 'acute' in a referral letter because he couldn't think of the English term), South Africa (where nurses acted as translators between patients and English-speaking doctors) and Malaysia (where patients struggled to be understood by their English-trained doctors), the concern was with the role English played in the inequitable access to medical provision around the world. The 'sociologist', by contrast, used close analysis of the language of medical encounters to show how patients arrived at a point where they felt their concerns were being taken seriously and were potentially treatable (doctorable). Both seemed important concerns – the one a broad analysis using Foucault and theories or globalization among others (though arguably rather light on analysis), the other close textual accounts drawing on conversation analysis of doctor-patient recordings – but the fact that the linguist looked at wide social and political questions while the sociologist focused on key moments in spoken interaction seemed to go against common expectations.

The sociologist was John Heritage, who had taken over the mantle of the ethnomethodological interests of Harold Garfinkel at UCLA (Heritage 1984). The seemingly odd aspects of this panel debate interestingly reflect the origins of Garfinkel's own research while a doctoral student at Harvard. Garfinkel was concerned with identifying the 'Trust Conditions' (see Rawls' foreword to this book) needed to mitigate the types of inequalities in medical encounters the panel was discussing. As a young Jewish scholar, Garfinkel was acutely aware of the restrictive quota system limiting the number of Jews into post-WWII professional schools in the USA. His research sought to reproduce the discourse conditions of pre-medical

school interviews and examine the additional anxiety they produced in minority candidates hyper-sensitive to the 'uncommon' expectations of the majority gatekeepers in these high-stakes interactions. The heightened anxiety and societal inequalities (re)produced in these institutional encounters also reflected what Du Bois described as a 'double consciousness' (Du Bois, [1903] 2007), in which the pressures of conformity to dominant norms served to undermine the bonds of racialized or ethnic minority community membership (Turowitz & Rawls, 2021). Identifying the language and discourse-embedded Trust Conditions necessary for more equitable encounters was thus a 'bottom-up' research agenda explcitly directed towards broader social justice goals that underpin the chapters of this book.

As Heap (1984: 169) succinctly notes, 'ethnomethodology is the study of how reasoning and activities are organizable, within the limits and resources of a culture, as rational, identifiable events and occurences'. Ethnomethodology thus eschews the large abstractions common to sociology – class, gender, race and so on – in favor of an understanding of practical everyday reasoning in face-to-face interaction. There are some parallels here (not often acknowledged) between ethnomethodology and Bourdieu's (1977) interest in *practice*: How do our everyday practices relate to wider social effects and how do such social relations in turn affect our practices? The notion of the *habitus* was developed to account for these processes. How, for example, are broader social inequalities realized in the everyday cultural practices of schooling? As conceived by Harvey Sacks, Emanuel Schegloff and Gail Jefferson, conversation analysis (CA) developed as a crucial means to investigate everyday social action by looking at conversations in close detail. A key theoretical principle of CA is that social order is produced and reproduced in apparently unimportant details of spoken interaction (Birkner *et al*., 2020).

For applied linguists who encounter CA only as an apparently obsessive concern with adjacency pairs and a very time-consuming approach to transcription conventions for close analysis of data, it may come as a surprise that the origins of CA are in sociology, that some of its major figures (such as Heritage) are sociologists, and that it claims to deal with major social issues while engaging with the minutiae of conversational interaction. It is important to understand, therefore, that CA is not principally interested in analyzing conversations as the end point. In their book on spoken language – *conversational English* – aimed at language educators, Thornbury and Slade (2006) only devote a fairly small amount of space to conversation analysis: Not only is it one amongst several ways of looking at spoken data, but its central goal is not, in the end, to describe

conversations but to shed light on wider social orders through this analysis. In his book on *spoken discourse,* by contrast, Rodney Jones (2016) has much more space for CA (and a clear explanation of these issues) because he is interested in the *consequentiality* of spoken discourse – the close analysis and larger implications, for example, of 'coming out' discourse – and thus the careful analysis of spoken discourse and its wider social effects.

The attention to detailed analysis in CA means that it appears on the radar of some applied linguists principally as a potential methodology: student/researchers ask us if CA might be a useful methodology for dealing with their research data, and we rightly caution them against its adoption for particular tasks: it's more detailed than you need, it takes too long, no reason to go into all that detail. Try critical discourse analysis (CDA) instead (both are often seen in these methodological terms) because you can get there more quickly without all the fiddly details. In his book on research methods in applied linguistics, Dörnyei (2007) only mentions CA once, as a type of highly specialized analysis of language data. CA is sometimes seen in the same light as Alison Lee's (1997) description of Systemic Functional Linguistic (SFL)-based genre literacies as a 'pedagogy of deferral': just as you're not literate until you've mastered the important genres, so CA asks us to wait, to be patient, to refrain from jumping to unwarranted conclusions until we've done the analysis properly. Like SFL, CA also seems at times open only to those who have done the intitiation ceremonies and are prepared to spend the hours following the prescribed forms of analysis. The point, however, as Schegloff (1997: 180) explains in a response to CDA critics who saw CA as blind to larger social forces, is that that although CA can lead to 'impatience in those who aspire to more global claims and assertions', detailed analysis of interactions that might at first sight seem unremarkable or easily characterizable, 'turn out to yield rather more complex, and differently complexioned, understandings'. This goes to the heart of a continuing concern in (critical) discourse analysis (Schegloff's comment is part of a series of exchanges over several years in the journal *Discourse and Society*): how much do we read into texts from our prior assumptions and how much can we read out of texts without prior assumptions?

It is a pity if CA is considered only in largely methodological terms, as a means to describe conversations in close detail. There are a number of ways that CA needs to be understood as a much broader enterprise, even if one does not share the same ethnomethodological framework and the tendency to suspend analysis of broader sociological categories. The questions that are basic to CA – how do we understand how the wider forces

of the social order and the local practices of interaction are related? – remain crucial for an area such as applied linguistics. McNamara (2019) gives the example of road rules to explain this: on the one hand the explicit and codified rules of the road (which side to drive on, how fast to go, when you can overtake and so on), on the other hand the everyday practices of driving (adapting to other drivers, local conditions, passengers in the car). The question is how these interact. McNamara (2019) argues that this kind of understanding can be very useful for seeing how gender and sexuality are performatively realized. If we want to take Butler's (1997) understanding of how gender is produced in social life seriously, we can use CA to show these interactions at work on an everyday level. Like Hacking's (2004) argument that we need not just Foucault and not just Goffman but the two together – one to show us the macro-operations of discourse and power, the other to show us how this works at the micro-level of language – McNamara (2019) brings together CA with Butler's (1997) idea of performativity: if we want to see how subjectivities are called into being, we have to look at the micro-politics of language use to see how this actually works, how the 'turn-by-turn enactment of social positioning…closely parallels the notion of the endlessly iterated performativity of discourse' (McNamara, 2019: 220).

What makes this book particularly important – for this book series (where we have not published CA work previously) as well as for applied linguistics more generally – is that editors and authors have sought to extend these arguments by showing explicitly how the big issues of critical analysis – racism, for example – need to be understood through close analysis of daily interactions, to show how and why CA can indeed be a tool for critical analysis. While not from a CA lens, analyses of the interconnections between wider societal order and local practices have shed light on race and racism in previous books in this series. One example is Christopher Jenks' (2017) monograph, which draws on studies that through close readings of such data as advertisements, legal documents and interviews with language teachers help us to understand the normalization of inequity and subsequent production of racism. Similarly, Andrea Sterzuk was able to look carefully (again not CA, but certainly a detailed and revealing analysis) at the discourses of teachers in her (2011) study. Her participants were unaware of the concept of English language variation as applied to indigeneity and instead used terms such as 'deficit', 'lower language skills' and 'improper' (2011: 97–99) to describe the Indigenous English of their First Nations and Métis students, offering an easily identifiable connection to the formation of race and racial discrimination. Other books in the series have addressed dimensions of racial

identity and identification in relation to being considered 'half' (young people of mixed backgrounds able to trade on their novel status in Japan but also denigrated as less than whole) (Kamada, 2010) or the intersectional relations between gender and race in English language learning in Japan and Australia (Takahashi, 2013).

This book is a welcome addition to our series because it helps tie these levels of analysis together, showing why close analysis of data is always important while we also maintain our focus on major processes of inequality and exclusion. As we consider the range of potential approaches to studying language and society, we wonder about the degree to which our understandings of injustice are better informed when we move our analysis from a broader lens to the fine-grained detail of CA. If there is a close CLLS series comparison to this discussion to be made, it would be in the recently published afterword by Rampton *et al*. (2023) and their advocacy for the 'Total Linguistic Fact' as a more complete frame of reference for understanding the micro-macro elements of sociolinguistic interaction and their potential adoption for transformative (additional) language pedagogies. CA, we should also note, has been used in many applied projects: Heritage's (2009) work on medical communication (the idea of doctorability, for example) being but one example. Conversation matters: 'every conversation we have involves issues of identity, agency and group affiliation; every conversation involves us in some way "putting ourselves on the line"; and every conversation demands from us that we *respond* to other people, not just in terms of what they are saying, but also in terms of who they are being' (Jones, 2016: 181). It is our hope, therefore that this book will be read not just by conversation analysts interested in seeing good examples of analysis, or in how the tenets of ethnomethodology can be challenged by bringing in social categories early in the analysis, but by a much broader range of people interested in questions such as racism that these chapters address, and in the challenge that these analyses pose across a wide range of institutional settings: unless we look closely at the data, our sweeping assertions may rest on fragile ground.

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