

Linguistics/Sociology 273A
Language and the Body
Lerner/Thompson
Fall 2015

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Course Outline

Goals

This interdisciplinary course brings together the methods and findings of interactional linguistics and those of conversation analysis in a dialogue centering on the visible behavior of the body in the organization of talk-in-interaction. The main aim will be to find ways to describe, account for, or at least come to terms with, the relationship between various sorts of visible and vocal conduct – especially gesture, gaze, body movement, and prosody – and everyday language use. A primary goal would thus be the formulations of new understandings of the ways in which spoken language, including "grammar" and "meaning", is intertwined with gesture, gaze, and body movements in face-to-face naturally-occurring interactions.

This course will fulfill LISO (and possibly departmental) requirements; please see your advisor and/or the instructors to check on your particular needs.

Enrollment

The course can be taken as either a one-quarter course (4 units) or as a two-quarter (4 units + 2 units) course.

Written work

Assignment 1a. *Depiction of visible conduct – choosing data*

- For the second week, **Oct. 2**, find about 3 to 5 seconds of interactionally interesting video from the course video recording and attempt to devise a method for depicting the **visible** aspects of the action in conjunction with the talk, keeping track of (1) your reasons for picking the particular extract, (2) your motivations for the method of depiction you used, and (3) assessing the successes and troubles you encounter in the process. Your goal is simply depiction, not hypotheses or ideas for projects (but of course depiction can be informed by analytic interest and this should be noted).
- Plan to briefly show your video clip in class and discuss points (1)-(3).

Assignment 1b. *Depicting visible conduct – adding visible action to a transcript*

- For the third week, on **Oct. 9**, you'll hand in your transcription. Please bring handouts of your transcript for everyone, and be prepared to very briefly discuss your reasons for picking the particular extract, choosing the method of depiction you used and assessing the successes and troubles you encounter in the process.
- For this assignment, you will find it important to familiarize yourself with the approaches that will be furnished to the class, but we encourage you to apply your own ideas in deciding how best to depict visible conduct. Be creative!

Assignment 2. *Paper Topics*

- Find at least two extracts from the data (either your own or 'Game Night') that exemplify two **different** possible research paper topics – based on the course readings and topics. Make sure to complete the readings through Week 6 before making your final topic selection.
- Write a one- to two-page analysis of the data extract and précis for each topic. In consultation with the instructors, choose one of these topics to pursue for your paper.
- **Assignment 2** is due the sixth week, **Oct. 30**. Be prepared to show both extracts in class and briefly present which one you favor and why.

Assignment 3. *Term Project*

Note: Over the years we have found that the most successful term projects build on – or are touched off by – something in one or more of the course readings.

a. If you are taking the one-quarter version of the course, you'll write a short (five- to ten-page) paper (not including transcripts) describing the workings of some aspect of the visible component of interaction, using examples from the course data (and elsewhere if you like), and its relation to talk-in-interaction in the context of the course readings and topics. You can expand the topic in one of your two-page papers from Assignment 3 or choose another phenomenon (in consultation with the instructors). Assignment 3 is due during finals week, exact date to be determined.

b. If you are taking the two-quarter version of the course, you'll turn in a rough sketch of your proposed research during finals week of the first quarter and spend the first 8 weeks of the second quarter **meeting with the instructors at least twice** and preparing your final research paper. During this period the class will meet a couple of times at the regular class time to enable students to present their work in progress and get feedback from the instructors and the other course participants. We will also meet during the ninth and tenth weeks of the Winter quarter, so that students can present their papers to the class. Papers will be due during finals week. Papers should contain both detailed data analysis providing evidence for the phenomenon and a discussion of its relation to one or more of the readings.

Class video

In class we will focus on the video ‘Game Night’. The transcript for ‘Game Night’ can be downloaded from GauchoSpace. We will distribute the course video at the first class session, so please bring a flash drive or your laptop. Please consider purchasing the “Pro” version of QuickTime 7 (\$30) for your Mac or PC computer, so you can extract and save short movie clips for your course project. <http://www.apple.com/quicktime/extending/index.html>

Class Participation

We will meet weekly during the Fall quarter (9:00-11:45 Fridays). Each session will be divided between

- a. Discussion of Readings.
- b. Data session:
 - viewing small sections of the class video of conversational interaction and discussing issues of 'language and the body' that emerge from our joint observations of the video (and transcript of the talk)

Participants will be expected to do the following:

1. Read and be prepared to discuss the weekly readings.
2. Present one or two of the readings during the quarter, according to the Guidelines below.
3. Spend at least 30 minutes a week previewing the assigned video section of Game Night before we examine it as a group on Friday. Be ready to bring up at least one interesting feature in the assigned video section for discussion.

Guidelines for Presenting Reading Assignments

- assume everyone is familiar with the reading, so you don't want to summarize it
- plan to take only about 5 to 7 minutes for your presentation
- state what you think is important about this reading
- state why you think this reading was assigned
- state how it seems to you to fit into the course, and how it is relevant to other material in the course
- introduce an extract from the class video that bears on the reading (if possible)
- offer 2 or more questions that you'd like to see form the basis for the day's discussion of that reading
- if you wish, offer your own alternative analysis or understanding of the point the author is making
- optionally, hand out a brief outline including your main points, the author's main points, and/or important or confusing quotations for discussion.