

DISCUSSION OF THE WHOLE GROUP VIEWING SESSION

Discussion format

On the morning of the conference's second day all the participants gathered to review and discuss the same two-minute video clip they had watched individually or in pairs on the previous afternoon.

The format for group viewing was one developed in the early 1980's by Brigitte Jordan and Frederick Erickson, who were then colleagues at Michigan State University (see discussion in Jordan, B., & Henderson, A. (1995). Interaction analysis: Foundations and practice. *The Journal of the Learning Sciences*, 4, 39-103. Group viewing, usually in a gathering of five to nine members, was designed to be exploratory and open-ended, with participation on an even footing by all group members. Each session involved watching new footage brought by a group member who had not previously reviewed or analyzed that footage. After watching the video segment for a while without stopping or commentary, the segment would be played again. At that point "Quaker-meeting-like" turn taking procedures would apply, in order to equalize access to the floor by all participants. At any moment a group member could say "Stop", the video would be paused and the group member would make comments on what they had noticed visually or auditorially in the footage just prior to the stopping point. Also in Quaker fashion, ideally in early rounds of stopping, commenting, and replaying, members would not comment on what other members had said, but just report their own noticings. Gradually the discussion would shift to collective brainstorming—presenting ideas for possible lines of analysis and transcription and commenting on the observations of other members. But this was exploratory discussion, not an ongoing inquiry in a working group, and so a new video example was considered in each new meeting.

This group viewing format was used in the first plenary session in the conference after the initial individual viewing sessions as an additional way to foreground and make visible the noticing patterns of conference participants. The whole group was larger than a usual video-watching group—seventeen persons including the discussion leader. Nine of these were senior scholars, and eight were younger scholars. Nine of the scholars were men and eight were women. In addition there were around a dozen visitors observing the discussion.

The Discussion Itself

After watching the video segment one time without stopping, the segment was replayed, with participants self-selecting turns to comment on the video, by saying "Stop." Participation was very active and the session ran overtime. The discussion reveals considerable individual differences in what participants noticed. Some noticings focused on gestures, some on postures and interpersonal distance relationships, some on gaze. Some noticings related to word choice and to shifts between Spanish and English. Some noticings focused on the subject matter content of the lesson—the notion that matter occupies space--and other noticings focused

on social relatedness in the actions of the teacher and students and on verbal and nonverbal ways in which the teacher guided student attention in real time.

Upon reflection after the session it became apparent that gender and academic seniority differences were being manifested in the interaction among participants—overall, men took more of the air time than women and more senior scholars took more air time than did more junior ones. This was partly a result of the format for group discussion—self-selection of turns at talk. The whole session lasted one and a half hours. In a first phase of the discussion turns at talk were selected by men, predominantly, although one woman participant also spoke during that phase. In a middle phase of the discussion, the distribution of talk was more equal between men and women, and in the concluding part of the discussion men again took more turns than did women, and often (but not absolutely) men took longer turns at speaking than did women. Some of the most junior scholars self-selected to speak multiple times during the session but others spoke only once or twice. In other words, the whole group, without deliberately intending to do so, was re-enacting patterns of gender and status disparity in conversational participation that are characteristic of the wider society. These differences were noted by participants later that day and in the evening, and they became a major topic in the concluding plenary session of the conference. In spite of the opportunity for openness to participation that Quaker-style self-selection of speaking turns affords, it was evident that gender and academic rank privilege and disprivilege was still present in the discussion as it actually played out in real time enactment. This may be partly due to scale— a larger number of speakers present makes for greater face threat and more difficulty in gaining the floor than does a small group of academic peers watching video together—the original version of this discussion format. It is possible that, as a learning environment, viewing sessions using this turn-taking format may be more appropriate for smaller, equal status groups than for larger groups with mixed ranks.

Opportunities for Reflection and Research

The whole group viewing session, as presented here (together with its ensuing whole group discussion in the concluding “Future Directions” meeting at the end of the conference) provides at least two possibilities for reflection (and also for formal research) by visitors to the website. First, research attention could focus on differences in noticing that are apparent in participant comments as they watched the video segment. There were differences in orientation and professional socialization across differing fields—anthropology, linguistics, psychology, pedagogy in science instruction, and bilingual education. There were also individual differences among participants in attentional focus, some comments indicating primarily auditory attention and others indicating primarily visual attention.

Second, research attention could focus on the dynamics of gender and academic status disparity in the session. Were there differences in air time taken by men and women in the whole group conversation overall, and if so did the proportion of air time taken by men and women speakers vary across successive phases in the conversation? Who spoke most frequently and who spoke less

frequently? Who took longer turns and who took shorter turns? Who was interrupted while speaking and who interrupted? (Time code on the video makes possible such comparisons.) Were there qualitative differences in commentary by men and women and by more senior and less senior scholars—differences in tone and authoritativeness, some commenting by questioning as others commented by assertion? How, specifically, were gender differences and academic status differences manifested in the speech and nonverbal behavior of the conference participants in the whole group sessions? The video records of the two whole group conversations presented in this website provide rich opportunity for visitors to the website to pursue these lines of inquiry, and other kinds of sociolinguistic analysis as well.