

## LING135 Short Paper #3: Analyzing (your) Conversation

### The Assignment

In class we talked about communicative competence, which Hymes (1972) described as “our tacit cultural knowledge about how to use language in different speech situations, how to interact with different people engaged together in different speech events, and how to use language to perform different acts.”

You (probably) have communicative competence for your own speech community. However, this knowledge may let you down when interacting with a member of another speech community (i.e., a cross-cultural interaction). Tannen (1990) described miscommunications between men and women as this type of cross-cultural interaction.

In this assignment, you will describe a time when your communicative competence let you down, resulting in a breakdown of communication.<sup>1</sup> The interaction can be from any area of your life, and “cross-cultural” can be defined as broadly or narrowly as you would like (e.g., gender, region, generation, ethnicity, etc). Thinking about directness/indirectness, politeness, and/or high-involvement/ high-considerateness are all good places to start.

Your paper will include an informal transcript that illustrates the conversation (to the best of your ability/memory). At a minimum, this transcript will include two lines of dialogue, but it will most likely be longer and can be as long as necessary to illustrate the interaction. The transcript should be formatted as follows:

- |   |         |   |
|---|---------|---|
| 1 | Morgan  | I want your transcript to look like this.     |
| 2 | Student | OK. I will make my transcript look like this! |

Notice that every line has a number followed by the speaker’s name (or role) and then the utterance. Because this is a (very) informal transcript based on your memory, that level of detail may be sufficient to describe the interaction. If more information is needed (e.g., intonation, laughter, pauses), you can use the transcription conventions found in Sierra (2019). You can also review the Sierra (2019) to see how transcripts are incorporated into a paper more generally. Be sure to either get explicit permission from participants to use their names OR use pseudonyms. It is considered best practice to have a sentence or

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<sup>1</sup> A “breakdown in communication” does not necessarily mean the interaction went up in flames. This can be pretty small or nuanced - it’s possible the other participants weren’t aware anything went wrong!

footnote with a disclaimer like “this transcript is recreated from memory to the best of my ability and therefore may contain inaccuracies.”

In your paper, you will give context for and describe the interaction (“what happened”) and then explain how your communicative competence let you down (“why it happened”). You will refer to your transcript by line number as needed.

Referring to your transcript by line number is much like referring to other types of examples in linguistics papers. If you’re writing about the transcript above, you could write: “In line 1, Morgan is illustrating how she wants the transcript to look.” OR “Morgan illustrates how she wants the transcript to look (1).” In the second option, the line number is written at the end of the sentence in parentheses, much like an in-text citation.

#### Nuts and Bolts:

You should aim for 3-4 pages (inclusive of the transcript), double spaced, with reasonable fonts and margins.<sup>2</sup> The finished paper must be **submitted as a PDF to Moodle by Friday, November 3rd at 12pm.**

**A note on writing style:** This assignment is closer to a personal reflection than a research paper, so you are not required to have any references. However, if you refer to specific concepts we have talked about in class, be sure to cite them with in-text citations and a reference list at the end of the paper. The paper doesn’t have to be formal academic writing, but use something that approximates SAE and pretend you have a copy editor (e.g., check for mistakes in spelling, punctuation, etc.).

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<sup>2</sup> Typically this is 10-12 point font, 1 inch margins.