

Ichiro:	That must be so bad for you.
Momoko:	The source of being fat.
Ichiro:	The epitome of ... being fat.
Kenji:	But Momoko-san, you could be a little fatter [you could put some more weight], couldn't you?
Ichiro:	Momoko-san, Momoko-san, even if Momoko-san eats deep fried chicken, she epitomizes being skinny.

5.5.1 Things to keep in mind: what you lose on the swings, you may gain on the roundabouts

We have reviewed some of the merits of group recordings for mitigating the observer's paradox. However, researchers should also bear in mind issues that are raised by collecting data in group recordings. These are not necessarily problems, but they are considerations to bear in mind when selecting methods for sociolinguistic fieldwork.

p. 140 The dynamic nature of group recordings means the researcher is unlikely to retain control over the structure and topics of the recording. For example, suppose you were interested in the linguistic routines speakers favour when they are negating or denying events—you may have to record a lot of spontaneous conversation before you find many examples of what you're looking for (unsurprisingly, people spend more time talking about things that *have* happened or they expect will happen than they spend talking about things that have *not* happened or that they anticipate will not happen). Moreover, the examples of negation and denial that you do serendipitously record may come from a very skewed subgroup of speakers or a particular subset of topics. If that skewing is likely to cause problems for the kinds of generalizations, you may be hoping to make (e.g. whether a change is in progress in how negation is expressed in that community), or if your time is limited, it might be expedient to use targeted questions in something more like a conventional interview that are likely to elicit negation. For example, questions like 'Have you ever been blamed for something you didn't do?' or 'Have you ever felt pressured to do something you didn't want to do?' may be more likely than ordinary everyday conversation to elicit discussion of non-events.⁵ The trade-off between losing control of the interaction and obtaining more naturalistic data should be a principled and informed decision that determines whether a researcher will use group recordings as the primary means of data collection.

There are also technical issues that sociolinguists need to bear in mind if they allow the speakers themselves to take control of recording interactions: recording quality may be compromised. If there are more people in an interaction, and if the conversation is very casual, there is likely to be lots of overlapping speech. This may make it difficult to identify every participant accurately, and it may be harder to transcribe everything that everyone says. This may be even harder if the researcher was not present when the recording took place. If someone else is deputed to make a recording, it is a very good idea to meet with them shortly afterwards in order for the depute to go through the recording in real time, identifying speakers and the general topics being discussed.

An additional consideration, if someone else is deputed to make recordings, is the time needed to train them. They need to be as aware as a trained sociolinguist about what situations to avoid (e.g. conditions with background noise from a television or air conditioner, or feedback created by having a microphone too close to other electrical equipment) and about the ethics of fieldwork. Individual microphones for each

p. 141 participant may alleviate problems with speakers being at different distances from a central microphone