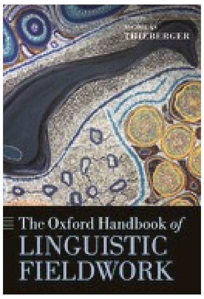

The Oxford Handbook of Linguistic Fieldwork
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CHAPTER

5 Sociolinguistic Fieldwork

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Abstract

Sociolinguistic fieldwork is at the core of this article. It is challenging to provide an account of methods associated with sociolinguistic fieldwork, as the field of sociolinguistics is extremely heterogeneous. Researchers who identify as sociolinguists may be asking questions about the relationship between language and power. They may equally be interested in the functions of and structural constraints on switches between different languages or dialects in a polylectal speech community. Sociolinguists have always been heavily influenced by anthropology, not least in their methods, and this means that a lot of sociolinguistic research reports qualitative results, in addition to the quantitative results of the Labovian social dialect survey. This article reviews two of the dominant approaches in sociolinguistic fieldwork: the sociolinguistic interview and participant observation. This dichotomy is an idealization, but it is a useful heuristic around which to structure the article. Since many of the methodological issues that sociolinguists have to deal with in their fieldwork overlap with those of any other linguist, some of the technical and procedural aspects of sociolinguistic fieldwork are explained in the article. This article extensively explores the intersection between sociolinguistic fieldwork and ethnographic traditions in anthropology and sociology, especially the shared interests in documenting everyday and unmonitored speech as a window on speakers' ideologies about and attitudes to language, society, and their interlocutors.

Keywords: sociolinguistic fieldwork, polylectal speech community, Labovian social dialect survey, dichotomy, ethnographic traditions

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5.1 Introduction

It is challenging to provide an account of methods associated with sociolinguistic fieldwork, as the field of sociolinguistics is extremely heterogeneous. Researchers who identify as sociolinguists may be asking questions about the relationship between language and power (e.g. 'What kinds of honorific forms does this group of speakers use when addressing or referring to some other group of speakers?'—cf. Okamoto 1997). They may equally be interested in the functions of and structural constraints on switches between different languages or dialects in a polylectal speech community ('What does the switch from stylized Asian English to local vernacular forms signify in the speech of British teenagers?'—cf. Rampton 2005). Or they may be concerned with identifying and accounting for the distribution of the different variants that realize a linguistic variable in a speech community ('In what linguistic contexts do speakers reduce the final consonant in words like [wɛst] and [dɹæ*g*ɡd]? Do all groups of speakers reduce the cluster equally often?'—Guy 1980).

p. 122 The latter approach is associated with the work of William Labov (1972a; 1972b; 2001), and generally uses quantitative methods at some point in the analysis. It is often referred to as 'quantitative' or 'variationist sociolinguistics', and for many people this study of synchronic variation in a speech community as a window on the diachronic processes of language change epitomizes the field. The tendency for 'variationist' to describe the methods of data collection and analysis associated with Labovian social dialect work is perhaps unfortunate: arguably, at some level all the sociolinguistic research questions outlined above are concerned with variation in how people use language to social and interpersonal effect.

Sociolinguists have always been heavily influenced by anthropology, not least in their methods, and this means that a lot of sociolinguistic research reports qualitative results, in addition to the quantitative results of the Labovian social dialect survey. Researchers adopting this synthetic approach (e.g. Eckert 2000; Sankoff and Blondeau 2007; Mendoza-Denton 2008) argue that it enhances the explanatory power of their accounts of variation. In this chapter we will review two of the dominant approaches in sociolinguistic fieldwork: the sociolinguistic interview and participant observation. This dichotomy is an idealization, but it is a useful heuristic around which to structure the chapter.

Since many of the methodological issues that sociolinguists have to deal with in their fieldwork overlap with those of any other linguist, we will not review all technical and procedural aspects of sociolinguistic fieldwork (see instead the chapters by Rice (18), Thieberger and Berez (4), and Margetts and Margetts (1) in this volume).

5.2 Key Concepts

We have already implicitly defined sociolinguistics as a field of research concerned with the study of how language is used in social interactions and in different social contexts. The motivation for focusing on language in its varied contexts of use lies in the conviction that there are limits to what can be elicited through direct questioning of speakers about what they believe is ‘good’ or ‘casual’ language, or about their awareness of when one linguistic code is preferred over another. Crucially, at the point of variation that is below the level of conscious awareness or below the level of social stereotyping, speakers’ intuitions fail to capture the entirety of their competence. Example 1 illustrates this: Nanbakhsh's direct question about the use of the 2nd person pronouns *to* (intimate) and *šoma* (deferential) elicits the conventional [±respect] meaning of the pronouns, and some insights in how *šoma* functions within an individual's larger habitus
p. 123 (Bourdieu 1990). But in ↳ none of her direct questioning did any of the Persian speakers show any awareness of an unconventional but widely used strategy that combines the deferential *šoma* with the subject–verb agreement marking associated with the intimate 2nd person singular pronoun *to* (Nanbakhsh 2010).

(1) Direct questioning about deference norms and the use of plural pronouns in Teheran Persian (Nanbakhsh 2010)[1]

Yasmina: female, 22-year-old university student

Golnaz:							
be	*næzære*	*šoma*	*forme*	*khætabiye*	*jam*	*mafhume*	*ehteram*
prep	opinion	2PL	form	address	PL	meaning	respect
ra	*mi-resun-æd?*						
OM	DUR-send-3SG						
‘In your opinion does the plural address form convey respect?’							
Yasmina:							
Na,	*ehteram*	*fægæt*	*ke*	*be*	*formez*	*khætabi*	
no	respect	only	emphatic	prep	form	address	
nist	*be*	*næhveye*	*bærkhord*	*æst,*	*momkene*	*šoma*	*khatabešun*
be.NEG	prep	manner	behave	is	possible	2PL	address.2PL
konim	*vali*	*ræftare*	*zænændeyi*	*dašte*	*bašim*	*ya*	*bæræx.*
do.1PL	but	manner	repulsive	have	be.3PL	or	contrary
‘No, respect is not only indexed with the forms of address per se but may also be constrained with the stance the individual takes in the use of that form in the interaction. We may address someone with the deferential address pronoun (*šoma*) while being repulsive or rude to them or vice versa, (i.e. respect may also be shown with the use of the informal address pronoun (*to*) but with a polite manner).’							

In addition, sociolinguists have repeatedly established that speakers use very different forms when they provide citation forms of speech than they do when speaking casually in conversation (discussed further below). So eliciting individual sentences or asking people to read aloud or to introspect on their linguistic practices all provide a lopsided picture of how language is actually used.

As a consequence, an important goal in sociolinguistics is to obtain 'natural speech', that is, how people use language in ordinary, everyday interactions with all the variability that this entails, since the full range of variability is missed by other methods.[2] However, the notion of naturalness is relative: sociolinguists are always subject to the 'observer's paradox' (Labov 1972a)—the inescapable fact that speakers are more aware of what they are saying and how they are talking as soon as you begin recording them (Meyerhoff
p. 124 2006: 38 points out the analogy with ↳ Heisenberg's uncertainty principle). In this respect, if maximally natural speech is how people talk when no recording is taking place, then this is impossible to capture ethically. Different methods for mitigating the effects of the observer's paradox in sociolinguistic fieldwork are discussed shortly.

It is, of course, necessary to constrain the scope of any study of language in use. In the variationist tradition, this is referred to as the sociolinguistic variable and generally denotes some unit of linguistic structure that is realized by two or more semantically equivalent variants—e.g. the variable (t, d) is realized as a final apical stop in the consonant cluster or is absent in [wɛst] and [dɹæg̸gd], above. By convention, variationists use parentheses to refer to the abstract linguistic variable—in this case, they would represent the alternation between either [t] or [d] in a coda cluster and the absence of an apical stop as (t, d).

Variables can also occur at the level of morphosyntax, for example the alternation between the presence or absence of BE in copula and auxiliary positions (cf. Meyerhoff and Walker 2007). Because of the requirement for semantic equivalence, it is more problematic to adapt this paradigm to the study of lexical alternates, e.g. *better* and *improved* may be functionally and referentially equivalent or they may not (such variation is perhaps better studied through genre or corpus-based methods). As noted above, it is possible to conceptualize the alternation between different codes as a similar kind of variation, but because it is impossible to define all and only the places where a code-switch can occur (as we can with a final consonant cluster, or the verb BE), this kind of sociolinguistic fieldwork is not associated with the terms and methods of variationist social dialectology.

What distinguishes sociolinguistic and anthropological linguistic fieldwork from other linguistic research is the search for socially meaningful units that co-occur with specific linguistic forms, routines, or practices. In other words, in addition to the dependent linguistic variable, sociolinguists are concerned with the study of independent social variables which may be more or less powerful constraints on the distribution of the linguistic variation they are studying.

Here is the first place where the traditions of participant observation in anthropology and ethnomethodology may articulate with the social science methods of variationist studies. Although many sociolinguistic studies examine the effect of a relatively small set of social variables on the linguistic features of interest—principally gender, age, social class, and ethnicity—these were never intended to be programmatic. Good sociolinguistic fieldwork deals with independent social variables that emerge through participant observation of socially cohesive subsets of speakers (Briggs 1986; Cameron et al. 1992 argue for the importance and feasibility of sociolinguistic fieldwork *with*, not just *on*, groups of speakers). Sometimes these social groups only emerge as socially meaningful in the course of the research; sometimes they can be recognized as socially meaningful quite quickly even by an outsider. Sociolinguistic terminology
p. 125 differentiates between ↳ meaningful social groups of different sizes and constitutions. The meaningfulness of some groups is identifiable through shared practices ('communities of practice': Eckert and Mcconnell-Ginet 1992), shared patterns of association ('social networks': Dubois and Horvath 1999; Milroy and Gordon 2003) or shared abstract patterns of variation ('speech communities': Labov 1972a).

Researchers define speech communities in different ways, some of which focus more on internal, subjective perceptions of commonality and some of which focus more on objectively (and externally) observed patterns of commonality (cf. Labov 1972a; Corder 1973; Duranti 1997). We will use ‘speech community’ as a very general cover term:

> A ‘speech community’ is any socially meaningful grouping of speakers whose direct and indirect interactions with each other contribute to the maintenance, establishment or contestation of a social order recognizable to the speakers or the researcher.

This definition is useful because it identifies some important issues for sociolinguistic fieldwork. These include:

- Contact between speakers may be direct or indirect (i.e. we need not restrict ourselves to only people who are aware of co-membership).
- Interactions may have very different linguistic outcomes (i.e. we are not concerned with debates over whether community is constituted through consensus or competition)—these differences in outcome are the object of sociolinguistic study (i.e. sociolinguistics attempts not only to document and describe variation in language use, but to relate patterns of language to social dynamics such as the exercise of power or what it means for something to be ‘innovative’ or ‘conservative’).
- Language use can be related in an orderly and systematic manner to features of the social setting that the speakers orient to (i.e. the formal linguist's notion of ‘free variation’ ignores linguistic or social systematicity in the variable use of different linguistic forms).

The focus on patterns of language use often leads sociolinguists to collect their own data, and in the following sections we will discuss in more detail some of the methods used. But it is important to realize that some sociolinguistic questions can be asked and answered using freely available sources of data. The media provides an excellent source of language in use, without the access issues (see below) that sometimes go along with collecting discourse from private domains. The internet has increased enormously sociolinguists’ potential datasets in the last decades. Generally, a minimal amount of social information is required about a speaker to enable sociolinguists to explore social correlates of variation (e.g. sex, approximate age, and general social class/occupation). This may not always be available for data on the internet (or other forms of media). However, if research questions don't require too much knowledge about
p. 126 who is producing the data and under ↳ what circumstances, the internet can be a useful tool for exploring some basic descriptive questions about language variation and language use (e.g. Herring 1996; Androutsopoulos 2006). Even some questions about social groups and variation can be explored by targeting subject-specific blogs or user groups. YouTube has recently increased greatly the accessibility of lesser-known languages for armchair sociolinguistic fieldwork (Wrobel forthcoming).

Having outlined some of the key concepts underlying work in sociolinguistics, we turn to more practical matters. In the next section, we look at practical issues associated with getting started. We then discuss the structure of the classic sociolinguistic interview and explain how the observer's paradox can be addressed within this kind of fieldwork methodology. We then discuss the use of group recordings as another means for addressing the observer's paradox, and finally, we discuss methods for enriching sociolinguistic fieldwork that borrow more from the anthropological tradition of participant observation.

5.3 Setting the Stage and Getting Started

5.3.1 Establishing an ethical framework for your research

Like a physician, first, do no harm (as also noted by Rice in Chapter 18 below). For sociolinguists, this means framing research in an ethos of respect and a recognition of the debt owed to the speakers who invite us into their lives long enough to study language in use. Rickford (1997), Wolfram (1998), and Cameron et al. (1992) all focus on what linguists can and should give back to the community they are working with. Wolfram's 'principle of linguistic gratuity' (1998: 273) and Cameron et al.'s argument that good research will actively include the interests of the community both emphasize the moral obligation sociolinguists have to ensure that research engages with and involves the people whose language we are studying. Moreover, as the debates surrounding Ebonics in the United States demonstrated, sociolinguists should be aware of the manner in which their research feeds into public discourses about the language varieties being investigated (Rickford and Rickford 2000; Baugh 2000).

Professional associations such as the British Association for Applied Linguistics (BAAL)[3] and the American
p. 127 Anthropological Association (AAA)[4] offer extended ↳ guidelines for ethical research, and all sociolinguists should be conversant with at least one such set of guidelines (see Rice's Chapter 18 below). This is not only imperative for the conduct of their own research; it can be strategically important too. Such guidelines often provide advice for longer-term research relationships and those where the subjects and the researcher know each other well. They may be more appropriate for sociolinguists than research guidelines set down by medical or psychological associations, which are designed with experimental research in mind. There is a lot of variability in how institutional research review boards (IRBs) or human research ethics boards operate: it may be useful to be able to situate sociolinguistic work within its appropriate academic tradition when applying for research permission.

For example, written consent forms (a common feature of IRBs) may be a good way of ensuring that participants are aware of the general purpose of the research and are reassured that the data will be used solely for research (see Johnstone 2000; see also Newman, Chapter 19 below). But in some cases, personal introductions and verbal guarantees may be more appropriate (e.g. Gafaranga 2007). Paradoxically, the conventional IRB insistence on signed consent forms may clash with speakers' desire for anonymity. This was true for Nanbakhsh's (2010) work in Teheran. People only felt at liberty to talk freely about social change since the 1979 Revolution if they had personal trust in her ability to guard their privacy. Moreover, in this case signed consent is what puts the consultants in danger by creating a paper trail that leads directly back to them if the researcher's materials are confiscated.

The primary purpose of getting consent (whether written or verbal) is to ensure that participants: (i) are aware of the general purpose of the research; (ii) are reassured that the data will not be used for any other purpose but research; and (iii) know they can withdraw their consent at any time if they wish.

5.3.2 Making contacts: planning an overall approach

A number of introductory texts in sociolinguistics outline methods by which researchers have successfully made contacts and been able to begin research within a community (see Milroy and Gordon 2003; Tagliamonte 2006 for social dialect research; Johnstone 2000 for qualitative research; Schleef and Meyerhoff 2010 outline many basic questions for smaller, e.g. student term paper, projects). Tagliamonte (2006) takes a rather extreme methodological position, urging the use of only community 'insiders' for making contacts and for doing the interviews, as she argues this elicits the most vernacular forms of speech.

In general, a flexible and pragmatic approach works best. If, for example, you are interested in how younger speakers use language, you will find your target p. 128 participants in the institutional context of a school. Indeed, a lot of sociolinguistic research has examined teenagers by first making contacts in schools (e.g. Heath 1983; Eckert 2000; Kerswill and Williams 2000; Mendoza-Denton 2008; though Cheshire 1982 actively sought out teenagers who were *not* going to school) or through after-school clubs/activity classes. However, if the research question is more concerned with how age and gender interact, and how they affect use of language across the lifespan, a broader spectrum of the speech community (e.g. families) where there is a mixed range of age and gender will need to be recorded (Sankoff 2004; Blondeau 2001).

A common first step is to contact people that you know, such as your family and friends, or people you work with who have ties to the community you want to study (cf. Tagliamonte 2006: 20–35). If your initial contacts introduce you to other people, you have the start of a snowball sample (sometimes called 'friend of a friend' networking). Milroy (1980) and Milroy and Gordon (2003) discuss this method in more detail. Labov's work (1972b) with members of street gangs represents the earliest systematic study of language variation through social networks. In this approach it is best to prepare brief questionnaires (whether administered verbally or in writing) for personal information. This is a useful way of categorizing and finding out more about participants whom you have little or no acquaintance with.

Familiarity between the researcher and the participants also has an impact on the patterns of language use that the study will record. Cukor-Avila and Bailey (2001) explore the effect of a familiar interviewer on how people talk, noting that speakers use more vernacular features in conversations recorded with someone they are familiar with, and that general familiarity of the interlocutors seems to have more of an effect on the likelihood that non-standard or vernacular features will be elicited than shared ethnicity alone does (cf. Rickford and McNair-Knox 1994).

5.3.3 Beyond 'friend of a friend'

Aside from being introduced to someone via a friend (or a friend of a friend), it is possible to gain entry to a community through organized groups such as societies, clubs, and churches. You can distribute an email to the club's email list (e.g. 'Participation in research required') or ask for volunteers through community bulletin boards but, in our experience, this produces a very low response rate unless you are already an active member of the club or community group. It helps to think creatively and brainstorm with friends, drawing on their ideas and networks, if your target community seems hard to crack into.

p. 129

5.3.4 Some comments about sociolinguistic fieldwork in institutional settings

If your aim is to collect data from institutional contexts such as schools and service encounters, you may need to undergo thorough checks of your probity and trustworthiness. These can take a long time (maybe months), so your fieldwork plans need to reflect this. Regulations governing access to institutions like schools or other groups that may be deemed 'at risk' (as the phrase goes in the UK) will vary depending on where you are, so you must seek advice locally. Because gaining access to institutional settings can be slow or problematic, it is advisable to have backup plans in case permission is not granted.

If you need the approval of a ministry or governmental organization prior to conducting your research, it is wise to inquire how other researchers have dealt with such issues. Contact with local universities and/or research institutes before fieldwork starts and good relations with these groups once fieldwork is under way can be helpful too. In addition to familiarizing you with ongoing research and establishing valuable communication channels which can secure ongoing progress in the field, it can help shape a social position for the sociolinguist within the local norms of research culture.

5.3.5 Cultural constraints on making contacts

Feagin (2004) discusses some of the problems that arise when the fieldworker is a foreigner, of different ethnicity, or not a native speaker of the language; these factors can have an effect on how likely people will be to make time for an interview, how they will construct or understand the fieldwork relationship (Briggs 1986), and how much a researcher can infer from patterns of language use that they observe.

On the other hand, doing fieldwork as an outsider can be an advantage. Hazen's (2000) fieldwork in a small town in North Carolina was facilitated in several ways by his liminal status. Because he had married into the community, he had family networks he could tap into, but as an outsider he was not as well acquainted with the speech community as his in-laws, and this also allowed him to assume the role of a 'student', asking questions that only an outsider could ask. Sociolinguistic fieldwork requires the researcher to accept some form of social role, and very often hybrid or new identities enable successful study of language use (Hazen 2000).

As noted above, a sociolinguist's preparation for going into the field (like any other linguist's) requires research into the community and the larger social and cultural context in which fieldwork will take place. In some places, rather conservative ideologies about the role of research and researchers can represent a further obstacle to undertaking sociolinguistic fieldwork. Haeri (1994; 2003) discusses p. 130 ↳ some of the challenges of positioning yourself as a researcher in this sort of cultural context, and reviews some of the techniques by which she overcame outsider status (and some inflexible limits on who she could do fieldwork with) in Egypt.

5.4 The Sociolinguistic Interview and Addressing the Observer's Paradox

5.4.1 What is a sociolinguistic interview?

One of the most common ways of gathering natural spoken data is the so-called 'sociolinguistic interview'. This method was developed and later modified by William Labov in his Martha's Vineyard and New York studies (1972a), and has since been used in various forms, by a number of researchers.

The classic sociolinguistic interview consists of four parts: (i) reading a list of minimal pairs, (ii) reading a list of words in isolation, (iii) reading a short narrative, and (iv) talking with the interviewer.

The first three parts are not what we would consider natural or casual speech—the purpose of the various reading tasks is to elicit a wide range of speech styles (defining 'style' is the subject of an entire sub-field in sociolinguistics: see Coupland 2007; Jaffe 2009; Meyerhoff 2006). When combined with free conversation, these tasks are treated as forming a continuum in terms of the amount of attention speakers are paying to their speech. This in turn provides one source of indirect evidence about the social meaning of different patterns and preferences.

Different types of speech can also be found in the conversational part of the interview. 'Careful' and 'casual' speech are typically characterized by changes in topic (e.g. talk about childhood memories tends to be more 'casual' than 'careful'), and addressee (addressing a third person, e.g. a child or another family member, is more 'casual', while addressing the interviewer is more 'careful'). Labov (2001) explores the impact of different topics within the interview in more detail. Thus, a sociolinguistic interview structured with some or all of these different activities elicits a continuum of styles for every speaker.

5.4.2 How many speakers is ‘enough’?

Usually sociolinguists who intend to do quantitative analyses of variation try to collect corpora that sample
p. 131 (relatively) evenly across the most relevant social ↳ categories in the community where they are working. It's hard to give one answer to ‘How many speakers is enough?’ because it depends on two things: what linguistic features you are interested in investigating, and what kinds of generalizations you hope to be able to make in the end.

For example, some phonetic features occur very frequently, and you can obtain a lot of data that is linguistically quite rich in even a relatively small sample of speakers. If the researcher's primary interest is to be able to make generalizations about linguistic structure, a small sample will probably suffice. Conversely, some syntactic variables occur rarely, and hardly at all in interview contexts. For instance, interviewees seldom question an interviewer, so a study of spontaneous interrogatives is unlikely to be well served by recordings of one-on-one sociolinguistic interviews. Recording multi-party conversations among friends and family members is likely to be a more useful source of data. Another strategy for ensuring that plenty of tokens of a low-frequency linguistic feature are collected is to record a large number of speakers for as long as possible. It is common for sociolinguists to repeatedly record the same people (repeat interviewing or recording is another means for reducing the observer's paradox, since speakers tend to be more relaxed in later encounters with recording equipment).

If you want to be able to generalize about the trends or preferences among groups of speakers, it is useful to have five or six speakers that fit into each of your target social categories. So if your primary interest is whether or not there is a change taking place in the speech community, a sample of speakers stratified by age is needed. Typically, sociolinguistic fieldwork will involve recording five or six younger, five or six middle-aged, and five or six older speakers. However, if the primary interest of the project is level of education (perhaps it is hypothesized that certain variants are used as markers of prestige or authority), the research might involve recording five or six speakers with primary education (or less), the same number with secondary education, and the same again with some post-secondary.

Of course, if the research questions hypothesize that there is an interaction between age and level of education, then the number of people that have to be recorded increases factorially. For example, to ask the question ‘Do people with more education in today's community (i.e. younger speakers) talk like people with less education in the past (i.e. older speakers)?’ requires a structured sample of five or six speakers in each of subgroup representing those intersections, i.e. six younger primary educated; six middle-aged primary educated; six older primary educated, etc. If gender is added into the picture (e.g. ‘Do younger men with more education in today's community talk like men with less education in the past?’), then the sample size needs to be even larger, e.g. 2 × 3 × 2 (education, age, gender).

p. 132 5.4.3 Overcoming the ‘observer's paradox’

The observer's paradox is triggered in an interview situation by: (i) the presence of someone in the role of fieldworker, (ii) the presence of the recording device, and (iii) the task itself. For these reasons, sociolinguistic fieldwork uses several methods for mitigating the effects of the observer's paradox in an interview. These include modifying the number of people in an interview, the kinds of topics discussed, and the activity.

Fieldwork frequently attempts to avoid the formality of a one-to-one interview by increasing the number of interviewees. In fieldwork in Osaka, Strycharz (2011) usually invited more than one person to participate in a conversation. This meant there was more interaction between participants themselves rather than between the interviewer and the participants, and hence more casual speech. This was perhaps particularly important since Strycharz is an obvious outsider to the community, and (though fluent) is a non-native speaker of Japanese. Since Strycharz (2011) explores how and when Osaka speakers use Standard Japanese vs. Osaka Japanese honorifics, it was extremely important to elicit casual, ingroup conversation (there is a strong expectation that speakers will use Standard Japanese in formal and outgroup contexts).

(2) More casual speech elicited in answer to an interview question in a multiparty conversation

A = Anna (interviewer, outsider); M = Mayuko, S = Shun. Both girls are co-workers in a kindergarten, talking about another co-worker, who clearly is known for saying one thing and doing another. Note switch from Standard Japanese *da* when replying to Anna, to local Osaka

p. 133 Japanese *ya* when talking to each other. ↳

A:	*Y-sensei*	*wa*	*donna*	*hito?*					
	Y-teacher	NOM.	what kind	person					
M:	*Kekko*	*ii*	*sensei*	***da***	*to*	*omou. Ashita*	*mo*		
	Fairly	good	teacher	SJ.COP	that	think Tomorrow	too		
	kuru	*tte*	*yutteta=*						
	come	QUOT	say.PROGR.PAST						
S:	*=Konai*	*to*	*omou*	*yo*					
	Come.NEG	that	think	SFP					
M:	*Eee nande?*	*Kuru*	*tte*	*iihatta*	*no ni=*				
	why	Come	QUOT	say.OJ.RH.PAST	even though				
S:	*=ma*	*iihattan*	***ya***	*kedo=*					
	well	say.OJ.RH.PAST	OJ.COP	but					
M:	*=ma*	*sou*	***ya***	*na*	*iu*	*koto*	*to*	*suru*	*kot*
	well	so	OJ.COP	OJ.SFP	say	thing	and	do	thir
S:	*so*	***ya***	*na …*						
	so	OJ.COP	OJ.SFP						
A:	What kind of person is Mrs. Y?								
M:	I think she's quite a good teacher. She is coming tomorrow as well=								
S:	=I don't think she'll come								
M:	why? She said she'd come=								
S:	=well, she said but=								
M:	=well, yeah, the things she says and the things she does hahaha								

S: that's right…

In Example 2, evidence that conversation with a friend rather than an interviewer produces more casual norms can be seen in Mayuko's switch from Standard Japanese *da* (when replying to Anna) to the local Osaka Japanese *ya* (when talking to Shun, and Shun's reciprocal use of *ya*). Other cues that the young women are more relaxed in their conversation include the latching between Shun and Mayuko's turns, their rapid setup of shared knowledge (e.g. Shun 'Well, she said, but' Mayuko 'Well, yeah, the things she says and the things she does'), and the fact that Mayuko doesn't need to finish the proposition opened by 'the things she says and the things she does' for Shun to agree with her. These are all cues of a close and casual relationship (cf. Wenger's 1998 cues for identifying co-membership in a community of practice).

Another strategy for addressing the observer's paradox in interviews is to increase the number of interviewers. This may seem counterintuitive, but Wolfram (1998) reports that the dynamics of a recording session can be changed in a very natural way by having two interviewers—for example, it reframes the event as two friends or a couple having a conversation not an interview. Wolfram suggests that the presence of two interviewers also allows the conversation to naturally develop with a wider range of ideas and topics.

A third strategy involves removing the interviewer altogether. This has the benefit of minimizing the effect of outsider presence, but it also means we have no control over the recording. In research on adolescent speech in Glasgow, Macaulay (2002) recorded pairs of same-sex adolescents without an interviewer present. This seems like a good cross between the sociolinguistic interview and a natural conversation—the setting was quiet and the conversations were somewhat structured, so a lot of data could be gathered quickly from a range of speakers. At the same time, leaving the teenagers to talk on their own produced more relaxed conversations than a classic interview might have (perhaps especially an interview with an older academic). Fieldwork that is based on group recordings where the sociolinguist is more or less removed from the flow of conversation has its own methodological issues, which we discuss in more detail shortly.

5.4.4 Questions: what to ask, how to ask?

The questions we ask are, of course, a crucial part in conducting a good sociolinguistic interview. Since the
p. 134 interview should resemble as much as possible a natural ↳ conversation, the interviewer has to keep in mind that he or she is not only a fieldworker and a researcher, but also a speaker and a hearer in a conversation. Tagliamonte (2006: 39) suggests three tricks that will improve an interview: (i) volunteer your own experiences, (ii) react and respond when new issues arise, and (iii) follow the conversation wherever your interviewee wishes to take you. Since this is what we normally do when having a conversation over coffee, these are skills that most people already have in some measure.

The questions we ask are an important factor in establishing the interaction as casual, but they are also key to getting the interviewees talking. There are some questions that are likely to be suitable for most people in any community (family, childhood, dreams, etc.), but there are other questions whose appropriateness will depend greatly on where and whom you are interviewing.

Some topics have proved to be better for eliciting more natural speech. These include topics where speakers can get emotionally involved, for example when talking about their childhood or life history, and this topic has the added advantage of eliciting information about a speaker's biography which may be very useful for adding a qualitative interpretive component to any subsequent analysis. Storytelling recalling personal experiences has also proven to be a great way of eliciting casual speech.

One question that is by now famous in its own right is the 'danger of death' question: 'Have you ever been in a situation where you nearly lost your life? When you thought this is *it*?' Answers to this question usually require some emotional engagement, and it may trigger stories with an abundance of vernacular features (Labov 1972a; 1984). However, it does not necessarily work in all speech communities and for all individuals. Milroy and Gordon (2003) review a couple of studies where the 'danger of death' question seemed unsuitable for various reasons. In a North Carolina study (Butters 2000), the question was often commented on as being 'too scary', and some interviewees refused to answer it, while in Milroy and Milroy's (1978) study in Belfast during the Troubles, the question was treated with minimal emotional involvement, and usually answered in a dry, matter-of-fact way. One of the speakers who contributed to the Bequia corpus (Meyerhoff and Walker 2007) started to cry after answering this question, a telling reminder that good interviewers need to have a wide range of social skills (including knowing how and when to conclude an interview).

In addition, what makes a successful interview topic may be very particular to the community being investigated. The most emotional (and also fun) stretches of speech in Strycharz's (2011) Osaka fieldwork were provoked by questions about the differences between Osaka and Tokyo. Due to the long-standing rivalry between the two cities, people in Osaka for the most part are not very fond of Tokyo, and they are willing to talk about the numerous differences between the two cities and their inhabitants, recollecting funny encounters and misunderstandings between them and Tokyoites.

p. 135 The precise topics of a sociolinguistic interview will therefore be flexible; its main goal is to uncover areas of interest which speakers feel comfortable talking about. So a good approach is to be observant and act as we normally do in conversations with people we don't know well (or indeed don't know at all). Having some kind of structure prepared is important, but it is perhaps even more important to be flexible and willing to change the plan.

5.4.5 Setting and roles

One of the issues arising from gathering data by means of an interview is precisely that—the fact that we are 'conducting an interview'. For instance, in a classic interview, it is rare to elicit questions *from* the interviewee—that's simply not part of the interviewee role. The interviewer might therefore have to come up with a way to counterbalance the dynamic that may be automatically introduced when we set up an interview.

One good way to counterbalance this is to put oneself in the position of a learner (as in Hazen 2000; see also Labov 1984, and Briggs 1986, who discusses the fact that interviewees may perceive the interaction as one of apprentice/expert). Paying attention to the information obtained feeds into the next question, and being genuinely interested in the interviewee helps to build a less distant relationship than might otherwise be associated with interviewer/interviewee.

5.4.6 Disclosure in fieldwork

Problematizing the role of the researcher in sociolinguistic fieldwork raises questions about how much people should be told about the purposes and goals of the research. Schilling-Estes (2007) argues that researchers do not have to explain in detail what they are studying and why they are studying it. There are at least two reasons for this. First, unless you think you can explain linguistics and sociolinguistics in a wholly non-technical and inclusive way, explanations about vowel raising, object deletion, or the social construction of identity through code-switching may not be terribly informative to the people you are working with, and might be best saved for other audiences (see Barnes 1980 and Besnier 2009 on the problematic notion of 'informed consent').

Second, detailed explanation at the outset of a project about what sociolinguistic features are the target of investigation may bias speakers' performance (consciously or unconsciously). For instance, suppose you are interested in the speech act of complimenting, and you tell people you want to observe as many compliments as possible. They might consciously try to produce as many compliments as possible to assist
p. 136 your research or, conversely, they might try to avoid using them because ↳ they are self-conscious. Any compliments generated under those circumstances may offer interesting insights into who stereotypically makes compliments, and about what, but they won't necessarily offer more subtle insights into how compliments oil the social wheels of daily interaction that less monitored tokens of compliments might offer. Likewise, if you are interested in the alternation between local dialect forms of Japanese honorifics and the Standard Japanese forms, telling people this may heighten speakers' awareness of the contrast, pushing them to use more forms of one or the other than they might ordinarily use.

5.4.7 Practicalities of an interview: how long, how much, how many?

Opinions vary when it comes to deciding how long the interview should be. Labov (1984) suggests that it should last from one to two hours, but again it will depend on the research question. Most pronunciation features (e.g. whether people say *dat* or *that*) are far more frequent than grammatical features (e.g. relative clauses and negation), or discourse routines (e.g. compliments and topicalization). If you're interested in syntactic and discourse features (and even some phonological features are comparatively rare—Schleef and Meyerhoff 2010), even a two-hour recording might not provide a lot of data. Milroy and Gordon (2003: 63) suggest that 'certain speech phenomena may be difficult or even impossible to study using interviews'. For example, some of the phenomena sociolinguists are interested in (e.g. style-shifting and code-switching) emerge during extended everyday social interaction or are shaped by potentially idiosyncratic relationships among the speakers.

When interviewing someone for the first time there will inevitably be a fair amount of formality; in the course of a well-conducted interview it can disappear, or at least be minimized. Some studies have documented a shift towards more frequent use of vernacular features over time (hence, differences between the end of the interview and the beginning: Douglas-Cowie 1978; Coupland 2007). How long it takes for this familiarity effect to come into play is unclear—it probably depends on the individuals, but generally it is more than a matter of minutes. Some sociolinguists prefer to conduct subsequent interviews with the same person. Extended contact and repeated recordings over a period of time create the potential for more unselfconscious talk than a one-off interview can. For this reason, many sociolinguists adopt anthropologists' longitudinal engagement with the people they are recording (e.g. Mendoza-Denton 2008, whose recordings of the same young women span years). Repeat interviews have the added benefit of more background information about the speakers, and the integration of the interviewer as a familiar guest. Cukor-Avila and Bailey's (2001) fieldwork in the same small town has been going on for decades and they
p. 137 demonstrate that the ↳ familiarity of the interviewer has a major effect on speakers' use of local vernacular features.

Having considered the sociolinguistic interview as a fieldwork methodology, and introduced some of the methods for addressing the observer's paradox in the interview, we turn to an alternative fieldwork model: interviews with groups of speakers.

5.5 Group Recordings: Natural Interaction and Language Socialization

As we have noted already, recording people in small group interactions is another way of addressing the observer's paradox and of obtaining more naturalistic, spontaneous speech. Group recordings may reduce some of the awkwardness associated with overt recording, as they allow the speakers to self-select topics and self-select who speaks when. Participants may also feel more relaxed with familiar faces. This method has been used since the inception of sociolinguistics—Labov et al.'s (1968) study in South Harlem involved interviewing groups of friends, and more recent sociolinguistic work influenced by the traditions of ethnography continues to use it. This is particularly true of researchers interested in the process by which social meaning is assigned to variation in highly local interactions, sometimes conceptualized in the framework of communities of practice (Wenger 1998; Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992; Bucholtz 1999; Mallinson and Childs 2007).

Indeed, some research questions can *only* be answered by recording self-selecting groups of speakers that reflect everyday patterns of interaction. For example, language socialization (how children acquire the norms of their speech community in context) is best studied by observing multiple, familiar interactants—something that is not really feasible to study through interviews. Schieffelin (1990) and Ochs (1992) (cf. Schieffelin and Ochs 1986; Ochs and Taylor 1995) have led this research field for some time—Schieffelin's (1990) work on the linguistic socialization of Kaluli children (in Papua New Guinea) has been especially influential (cf. Makihara 2005; Garrett 2005; Riley 2007). This approach to sociolinguistic fieldwork documents how children learn to use language and acquire socially loaded linguistic routines (this methodological approach is shared by ethnomethodologists and many sociologists, e.g. Goffman 1971; Drew and Heritage 1992). In Kaluli society, for example, use of the phrase *ɛlɛma* ('say like this') is an important routine in socializing children, but these corrections of a child's prior formulation are most likely to occur in everyday speech. Socialization is clearly a process that takes place over a considerable period of time (perhaps throughout the lifespan), so p. 138 ↳ sociolinguistic work of this nature involves not only group recordings but extended periods in the field.

Another area of (socio)linguistic interest that rewards study of a range of naturally occurring speech events in the speech community is the effects of language contact. It is certainly possible to document instances of code-switching and individual features that suggest contact-induced change in the semi-formal speech of interviews (either sociolinguistic interviews or radio), but arguably the study of variation provides a more subtle picture of how contact effects take hold among speakers and how they diffuse through a language and a community. That is, by studying recordings of people's everyday chat, we can document how switches from e.g. Rapanui to Spanish and vice versa have interpersonal and social functions—constructing speakers as competent members of the community, or softening teasing between interlocutors (Makihara 2004; cf. Blom and Gumperz 1972).

Furthermore, there is a growing body of evidence documenting how language contact may have an impact on the realization of sociolinguistic variables across languages or varieties. For example, Buchstaller and D'Arcy (2009) explore the similarity and differences in constraints on the use of quotative *be like* in different varieties of English. Meyerhoff (2009) evaluates arguments for and against the transfer of variation from substrate languages into the creole Bislama. A number of articles in Meyerhoff and Nagy (2008) test hypotheses of contact-induced change in individual speakers' performance or in a speech community as a whole by comparing the details of variation in input varieties and output varieties (Blondeau and Nagy 2008).

This work documents the manner in which induced change diffuses through a linguistic system and through a speech community, thereby addressing questions of linguistic and sociolinguistic importance. It is simply not possible to elicit this kind of detail through direct question and answer routines (typical of traditional fieldwork), partly because the patterns involve differences in probabilities across different word classes, phonological contexts or social situations that they only emerge in a large corpus of everyday speech.

A final reason for favouring extended recordings in everyday interaction is that it can be difficult (if not impossible) to interpret the interactional meaning of some speech events without close and lengthy association with a community. Where the fieldworker is not a native speaker (or internal member of the speech community or smaller community of practice), a clear role as learner (see above) is required. For instance, if a researcher is interested in the function of specific speech acts, extensive observation within the community is needed. Adachi (2011) explores what counts as a ‘compliment’ in spontaneous Japanese conversation. To do this, she recorded extensively—in more than forty hours of multiparty recordings, she found only 369 tokens of exchanges that seem to function as compliments.

p. 139 In addition, to categorize exchanges as compliments required developing a sense of what prior associations a compliment conjures up and what expectations it generates for the future (cf. Ochs's 1992 notions of ‘retextualization’ and ‘pretextualization’ in talk). In some cases, knowledge about the particular participants was needed. In Example 3, it would have been impossible for Adachi (2011) to categorize Kenji's and Ichiro's comments as compliments if she didn't know that Momoko is in fact very petite in a community where petiteness is valued.

(3) Knowing the participants enables a better sociolinguistic analysis (Adachi, 2011).

Ichiro (male) and Momoko (female) are fourth-year university students. Kenji is a master's student. Ichiro comments on Momoko's sugar- and cream-laden coffee drink.

Ichiro:	*Sore*	*meccha*	*karada*	*ni*	*wari:*	*ken,*	*zettai.*
	that	very	body	for	bad	because	certainly
Momoko:	*Debu*	*no*	*moto*	*desyo.*			
	fat	GEN	source	COP			
Ichiro:	*Debu…,*	*debu*	*no*	*syouchou*	*yo.*		
	fat	fat	GEN	symbol	SFP		
Kenji:	*Iya,*	*Momoko-san*	*mou*	*chotto*	*debu*	*ni*	*natte*
	no	M.HON	more	a little	fat	GOAL	become
	mo	*iin*	*ja*	*nai*	*yo.*		
	even.if	okay	COP	NEG	SFP		
Ichiro:	*Momoko-san,*	*Momoko-san,*	*Momoko-san*	*ne:*			
	M.-HON	M.-HON	M.HON	SFP			
	chikinnanban	*kuttotte*	*mo*	*ne:*			
	fried chicken	eat.PRGR	even.if	SFP			
	gari	*no*	*syouchou*	*dan*	*ne.*		
	skinny	GEN	symbol	COP	SFP		

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 deputee 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 ↳ different distances from a central microphone

(Labov 1984), but this is not always practical. (We include a short checklist of factors to consider when undertaking sociolinguistic recordings as Appendix 1 in § 5.7.)

Another thing to remember is that groups have their own dynamics. Some people in groups are more quiet and some people are more loquacious. So recording in a small group doesn't guarantee that you will get good quality data from a lot more people. Labov et al. (1968) found that some people who were very quiet in group recordings talked freely in individual interviews. And the quiet people may not always be the group outsiders:

> In our South Harlem studies, the most extreme example was Jesse H., who never spoke a word in two group sessions. Yet Jesse was well known to be a person of consequence, who others turned to for advice, and in individual interviews he talked freely and at great length. (Labov 1984: 49).

People often come and go in the less structured context of group or walkabout recordings, and while it may be possible to find out some basic demographic information about participants (e.g. age, gender, social class, occupation, and education), other aspects of their social identities may be impossible to retrieve. These may include speakers' attitudes towards economic and social mobility (cf. Hazen 2002; Meyerhoff and Walker 2007), the communities of practice that individuals participate in regularly (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992; Bucholtz 1999; Meyerhoff 2001; Mendoza-Denton 2008), and many other identities particular to those speakers. Equally, some researchers may want specific data about the nature of the interactions recorded, such as who was sitting where, how participants made eye-contact, and what clothing they were wearing. Some of this data can be provided by video recording, but video is not always feasible or desirable (e.g. in Iran, videoing family conversations may be problematic because women often don't wear head scarves at home but they are expected to wear them in the presence of non-intimates, who might view the video).

Outside the lab it is hard to better the classic anthropological method of taking notes based on what you have personally seen and experienced in the field, typically known as participant observation. The photographs in Fig. 5.1 show the complex positioning and movement of speakers in the university common room where Adachi (2011) undertook some of her fieldwork. This placement and positioning needs to be noted independently if the sociolinguistic fieldwork is not based on video data.

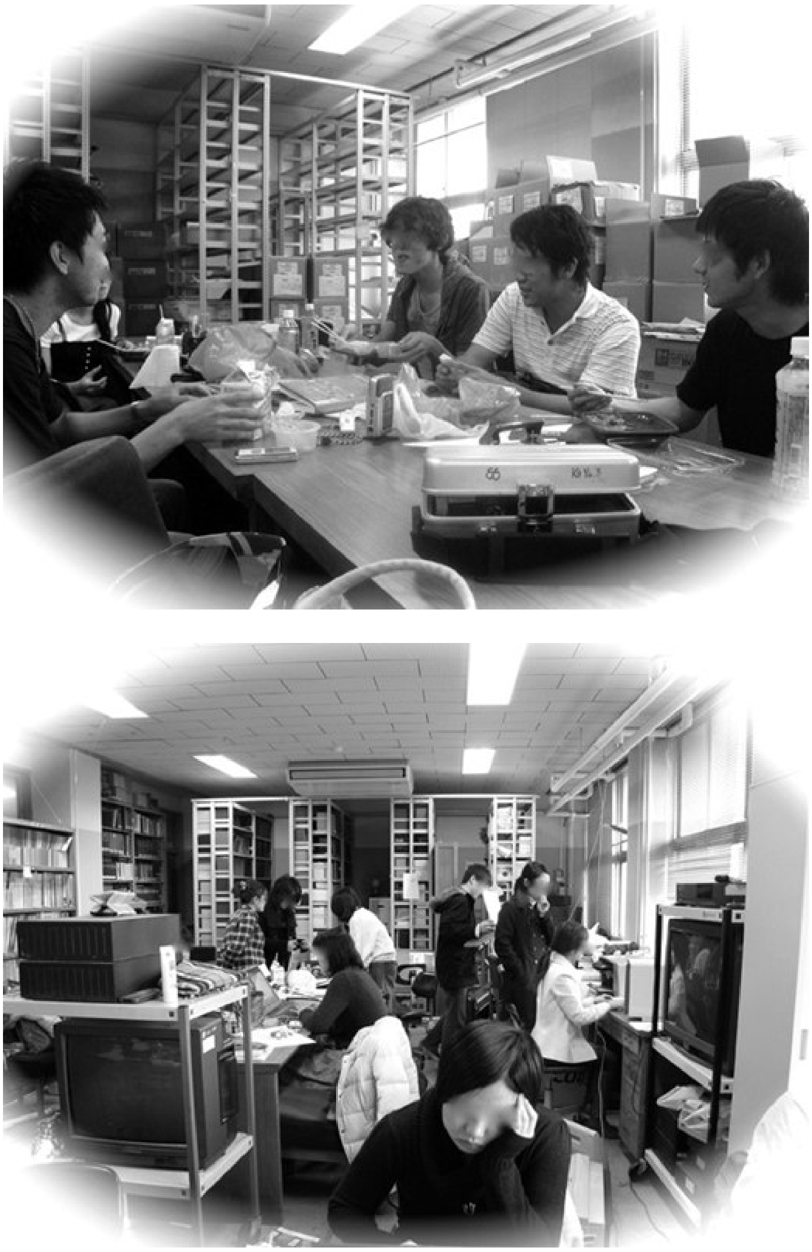
5.5.2 Ethics and the question of surreptitious recording

We have discussed in some detail ways of dealing with the compromises that the observer's paradox forces us into. Readers might ask: why not hide the recording device and simply not tell people that we are
p. 142
recording them? Wouldn't this ↳

p. 143 ↳

capture the most naturalistic and spontaneous data? The answer to this is quite simple: it is completely unethical to record people's conversations and interactions without their informed consent. It is a tremendous breach of personal trust and professional standards (see also Rice, Chapter 18 below).

Figure 5.1.



Photos of positioning of speakers recorded in a university common room at lunchtime as researcher aide memoire. Recording equipment is centre foreground in top photograph.

Students often ask whether it is acceptable to make secret recordings if the subjects have given you blanket permission in advance to record them at some unspecified time. This is also ethically unwise. In our experience, it is clear that people continue to subliminally monitor their speech when it's being recorded, even if they seem to be speaking in a wholly relaxed and casual manner. For example, socially or politically dangerous topics may be avoided. In addition, speakers should at any time be able to withdraw all or part of what they say, even if they have given permission to record. But even family and friends may find it face-threatening to contact a researcher afterwards and ask that certain parts of a recording be excised from a project. We should not compound these difficulties by having made surreptitious recordings, which under any circumstances is not good research ethics. Finally, in many places it is simply illegal to undertake surreptitious recording. For all these reasons, surreptitious recordings are never approved in any form of research.

Rice (Chapter 18 below) deals with research ethics in more detail, so we will simply note here the steps usually taken to ensure there is informed consent when recordings of spontaneous speech in public spaces are being collected. Adachi's (2011) fieldwork included recordings in a student common room at the university where she studied as an undergraduate in Japan. One of Adachi's former professors announced her research to all the students in the department prior to her arrival. She subsequently also explained to all the department students that she was going to be conducting recordings at lunchtime in the common room. Finally, on the days when she was actually recording, she put up a note in the room indicating that recording was in progress—this had her name and contact information on it. People who did not want to be recorded could avoid coming into the room as long as the notice was up. Hewitt, McCloughan, and McKinstry (2009) went through a similar process when recording interactions at the reception desks of doctors' surgeries. In this case, recording equipment was turned off when people did not want to be recorded.

5.5.3 Other methods for fieldwork with groups

In this section, we summarize some of the other ways group recordings can be organized.

p. 144

5.5.3.1 Group interviews (structured or semi-structured)

Group interviews can be conducted in much the same way as the classic sociolinguistic interview discussed above. Researchers can prepare specific questions in advance, moving on to the next one when participants don't self-select for further discussion. A semi-structured interview allows the researcher to offer topics that participants can talk about and lead them to have more dynamic discussions between themselves. This method is widely used in language attitude research, qualitative sociolinguistics and quantitative sociolinguistics (Milroy and Gordon 2003). Researchers may remain detached from the interaction with the participants or they may participate fully where they feel this will facilitate conversation.

Another type of interview is the 'playback interview' in which the researcher (whether s/he is a member of the recorded interaction or not) plays back parts of a recording to the participants and asks them to comment on the interactions selected. This method was pioneered by Gumperz (1982), and was the successful basis for Tannen's (1984) study of the conversational dynamics of an extended dinner party. This kind of fieldwork is particularly suitable for researchers interested in the points of convergence and divergence in participants' subjective interpretations of events.

5.5.3.2 'Free-style'[6] conversational recordings

Subject to the ethical considerations reviewed earlier, sociolinguistic fieldwork can be a little more unstructured still. Macaulay (2002) set up a conversation between teenagers (giving them some suggested topics but leaving the room himself) with a recorder running. In some cases, speakers have been asked to record all of their interactions for a whole day (Hindle 1979; Coupland 1984; Holmes 2006). This is a particularly good way of identifying how a single speaker modifies their speech in different contexts and with different interlocutors.

5.5.3.3 Audio/video recordings

Group recordings can be conducted with either audio or video recorders. The most beneficial method will depend on what kind of sociolinguistic questions you have. Video recordings can help overcome some or the problems associated with an absent researcher, as video may clarify who is talking to whom (it can't solve all such problems unless you have multiple cameras focused in different directions to capture everyone's gaze). Non-verbal cues may also provide information that's useful in analysing the give and take of conversational interaction. However, audio (at present) is still easier to use if a speaker is undertaking day long free-style recordings.

p. 145

5.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have reviewed some of the basic issues associated with undertaking sociolinguistic fieldwork. We started with an overview of some key terms in sociolinguistics (including ‘speech community’, ‘sociolinguistic variable’, and ‘sociolinguistics’ itself), and we discussed how these notions influence the methods of sociolinguists. We examined in detail the methods of the classic (Labovian) sociolinguistic interview, the rationale behind its structure and methods, and indicated some of its advantages and disadvantages depending on (a) the nature of the linguistic phenomenon being investigated, (b) the kinds of research questions being asked about the relationship between society and language use. We considered also the techniques employed in search of vernacular speech, within the context of an interview and variations on the one-to-one interview format, including group recordings. We explored the intersection between sociolinguistic fieldwork and ethnographic traditions in anthropology and sociology, especially the shared interests in documenting everyday and unmonitored speech as a window on speakers’ ideologies about and attitudes to language, society, and their interlocutors.

5.7 Appendix 1. Technical Tips for Successful Group Recordings

These apply to all recording contexts, but are essential for successful group recordings (see also Margetts and Margetts, Chapter 1 above).

Checklist

1. What kind(s) of device(s) are most suitable for your research (what microphone, what recording devices)?
   You might want to use small and unobtrusive recording devices to set participants at ease. If you are asking people to carry around a recording device, you will want a light but sturdy one.

2. Does the equipment work?
   Check all your equipment prior to a recording session to see if it is all working. Do a test recording and check the sound quality in a similar setting to the one where you are going to record.

3. Was the recording session successful?
   Check the quality of every recording soon after every session.
   Label the file carefully and clearly.

p. 146

4. ↳ Did the recording work? Save your sound or video files, and make a backup (or two) straightaway.
   Never underestimate the importance of backups. Ensure you have a safe copy of important information about each sound file, e.g. who it involves, where they were, when they were having the conversation.

5. Are you being responsible to your participants?
   Data that includes any individual's private information should not be available to anyone other than you. It is standard practice to use pseudonyms (or initials or speaker codes) when processing, saving, and reporting on data unless an individual has specifically asked to be identified in your work.

5.8 Appendix 2. List of Abbreviations Used in the Examples:

1	1st person
2	2nd person
3	3rd person
cop	copula
gen	genitive case (particle)
goal	goal marker
hon	honorific (title, suffix)
neg	negative, negation
oj	Osaka Japanese
om	object marker
past	past tense
pl	plural
progr	progressive
prep	preposition
quot	quotative
rh	referent honorific suffix
sfp	sentence-final particle
sg	singular
sj	Standard Japanese
=	latching utterances

Notes

1 The list of abbreviations appears in § 5.8 at the end of the chapter.

2 This is not at odds with Goffman's (1959) contention that all social acts are in some sense staged. It means the sociolinguist is most interested in those stagings that are representations of an unmonitored or informal persona.

3 http://www.baal.org.uk/about_goodpractice.htm

4 http://www.aaanet.org/stmts/ethstmnt.htm, see also more extensive resources at http://www.aaanet.org/committees/ethics/ethics.htm

5 Similarly, for low-frequency phonetic variables, a common strategy for eliciting a minimum of tokens from every speaker is to use what's called a ‘semantic differential’ question which asks speakers to focus on the differences between two words. Suppose you are interested in the realization of the diphthong in POOR and TOUR (which is the least frequent syllable nucleus in English), you could ask people ‘What's the difference between being *poor* and *well off*?’

6 The term ‘free style’ to describe this kind of recording as opposed to interview-based recordings was (we believe) coined by Agata Daleszńyska (2011). In the absence of any other widely accepted term to describe these yet, we follow her practice.