

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.