

The NUS Humanities and Social Sciences Talk-in-Interaction Reading Group present a pair of public lectures by UCLA Linguistic Anthropologists
DRS. CHARLES AND MARJORIE GOODWIN

Speaker : Dr. Charles Goodwin (UCLA Dept. of Applied Linguistics)

Time : 2:00pm – 3:00pm

Speaker : Dr. Marjorie Harness Goodwin (UCLA Dept of Anthropology)

Time : 3:00pm – 4:00pm

Date : Friday, 7 August 2009

Venue : BLK ADMIN #07-06 (The University Scholars Program 7th Floor Conference Room)

DR. CHARLES GOODWIN

Department of Applied Linguistics, University of California Los Angeles

Calibrating Bodies and Cognition through Interactive Practice in a Meaningful Environment

Abstract

Using as data videotapes of archaeologists working to see and map structure in the dirt that they are excavating; meaning-making in the home of a man with severe aphasia; and sequences of naturally occurring talk-in-interaction, this talk will investigate action, cognition, language use and objects as phenomena constituted through actual agent-object inter-action. In particular: rather than viewing 'cognition' as an abstract process lodged entirely within the mental life of sentient beings, 'language' as a nonmaterial process situated within the psychological life of the individual, and 'objects' as mute, unmoving entities, this presentation will focus on the mutual constitution of actors, objects, and communities within the ongoing organization of situated language use and of dynamically unfolding activities. From such a perspective, 'cognition' emerges as a consequential and practical issue – part of the process through which both the world that is the focus a community's scrutiny, and other actors, are known in just the ways that allow the work of the community to be accomplished. It will be argued that both cognition and action emerge through the systematic transformation of environments that contain a range of structurally different kinds of resources that mutually interact with each other.

About the Speaker: Professor Goodwin's research has focused on many aspects of language and interaction, including the co-construction of meaning, participation frameworks, the ethnography of science, aphasia as a social process, the social organization of perception through language use, as well as discourse in the professions. In particular, his work focuses on the practices human beings use to construct, in concert with each other, the social, cultural and cognitive worlds they inhabit. Central to this process are Language, structures for the organization of action-in-interaction, and an ecology of sign systems that includes not only talk, but also a range of different kinds of displays made by the body, as well as the semiotic structure in the environment.

Internationally recognized as a pioneer in the field of interaction studies, Professor Goodwin has been the recipient of many honors, most recently being granted an honorary doctorate at the University of Linköping in Sweden. His most recent works include the edited volume *Conversation and Brain Damage* (2003: Oxford University Press) and an anthology of his own writings translated into Italian entitled *Il Senso del Vedere: Pratiche Sociali della Significazione* (2003: Rome, Melterri Editore).

DR. MARJORIE H. GOODWIN

Department of Anthropology, University of California Los Angeles

Constructing Inequality Among Peers

Abstract

In this paper I am concerned with the language games through which children in a peer group come to know the social world while participating in an ongoing evaluative commentary on it. Peer interaction is examined within face-to-face encounters, or environments of mutual monitoring possibilities (Goffman 1972:63). Interaction occurs in the midst of larger social fields in which actors are constructed as incumbents to alternative social positions, assessed with respect to distinctive types of value. One's access to wealth and class is evident both through visible public displays of clothing, as well as the ways in which participants display their access to social arrangements that entitle them to talk about cotillion balls, cars, elite sports activities, foreign travel, future employment, and family estates. Examination of the language practices of a particular preadolescent peer group in a 'progressive' elementary school over three years reveals ways that members actively police their social order, sanctioning those deemed violators of local social norms. Rather than attempting to maximize affiliative actions, a form of human sociality emerges where members openly degrade violators and deny them a ratified participant status in local activities. Through this study I attempt to understand this interaction/social structure nexus (Schegloff 1992) by describing the range of practices through which identities are linked to specific actions within interactions.

About the Speaker: A principal concern of Professor Goodwin's research has been describing the embodied language practices through which children constitute their social world in the midst of moment-to-moment interaction as they play on the street or playground. Of particular concern has been describing dispute processes and forms of social exclusion in the peer group. Professor Goodwin's 1990 monograph *He-Said-She-Said: Talk as Social Organization among Black Children* is considered a classic in the field of Linguistic Anthropology, and her most recent book *The Hidden Life of Girls: Games of Stance, Status, and Exclusion* – upon whose findings the present talk reports – received The International Gender and Language Association's Best Book Award for 2006-2007.

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