Telling tales in and out of school: an analysis of experiential claims to knowledge

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TELLING TALES IN AND OUT OF SCHOOL:
AN ANALYSIS OF EXPERIENTIAL CLAIMS
TO KNOWLEDGE

by

ANN M. SMITH

Doctoral Thesis
Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the award of
Doctor of Philosophy of Loughborough University
1998

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To Ron

and our two sons

Paul and Carl
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ABSTRACT

I propose that education should not be a separately studied phenomenon, removed in analyses from other knowledge-construction contexts. To enhance this proposition I gather my data on experiential claims to knowledge from a range of contexts.

I consider the main proponents of traditional research in education and attempt to show how traditional models of experience in the acquisition of knowledge are based upon a partial adoption of the participants' categories themselves.

Then, an alternative model of experience is introduced - a discursive model based upon all the concerns of participants, not now seeing them as 'truths' but as positions. We do not now talk of knowledge being acquired, but rather as being constructed. The form and function of the invocation, of the legitimation and of the countering of experiential claims are examined using a discourse/conversation analytic approach, greatly influenced by the work of Harvey Sacks, which was developed in the 1960s and 1970s (although I give less attention to the specifics of talk organization than he does).

Garfinkel's ethnomethodology was the main precursory influence on this kind of discourse/conversation analysis. Also, philosophical views on language, developed by the later Wittgenstein, were influential to it.

Knowledge and experience are viewed not as possessions of individuals or groups of individuals, but as constituted locally in talk, through cultural resources which we, as humans, have at our disposal. Such constructions are context-sensitive and reflexively context-constitutive. Accountabilities are addressed by the participants to the production of unitary or multiple versions of knowledge; to the production of consensual or conflicting versions of knowledge (see Chapter 3).

In this thesis, language is regarded not as a reflector of reality or psychological processes, not as a medium or tool, but as a topic in itself, itself constituted in the realities it constructs.

Viewed from this perspective, experience has many dimensions, all warranting the validity of the knowledge claim and the experience: dimensions of participation in, interpretation of, category entitlement to, construction of, knowledge, on the part of the experiencer and subsequent tellers; as well as the dimension of passivity of the experiencer in the face of objective 'reality'. Viewed from the perspective of the traditional model of experience, formerly explicated, the co-existence of some of these dimensions of experience often becomes untenable.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It was Christmas Day in the workhouse;
The rain was snowing fast;
And a bare-footed girl with clogs on
Stood sitting on the grass.

(Anon)

To begin at the beginning with my first description, which will centre around the above ditty, a parody of the late 19th century poem by George R. Sims, entitled 'In the Workhouse: Christmas Day'. Potter (1996c) gives us an insight into the work descriptions could do in acknowledgements:—

"Acknowledgements do business of all sorts and are often the occasion for some pretty ambitious psychology and sociology."

Identity construction is one sort of business that can be done here and if this acknowledgement, in parts, has echoes of the television programme 'This is Your Life', with its present tense constructions, perhaps it is no coincidence.

A caveat perhaps is called for at this stage. It should not be assumed, because I insist that acknowledgements do social business, that I approach my debt to the following people in a cynical fashion. I assert that this is how indebtedness gains its being. It has no other way to achieve 'reality'. This is not to disparage indebtedness but to celebrate it, as with knowledge and experience in my thesis.

Returning to my first description, the above (the anonymous ditty) I shall attribute to my dad. If it is part of a larger, perhaps risqué, wartime creation, all the better to construct my childhood naivety. Although my dad's life and my own only overlap for eleven and a half years, with this and other contributions, my dad gives me an early insight that words are more than a reflection of reality and that there is meaning that a one-to-one word-to-reality correspondence concept does not capture.

Moving onwards past many nursery rhymes, novels, poems, pop songs, teachers, university language studies and suchlike, I emerge into the realm of education. After much input of developmental psychology, I arrive at the Cambridge Institute of Education and owe much to Rex Gibson (later of Shakespeare-in-Education fame) for a stimulating broadening of my knowledge of the Sociology of Education. As an educationalist, my main interest now becomes Social Psychology but I am still very attached to my roots in Language.
Skipping onwards to the nineties, I owe much to the Open University ‘Research Methods’ and ‘Language and Literacy’ Master of Arts in Education teams. Neil Mercer is one of the organizers of the latter and it is his set book for the course, ‘Common Knowledge’, written jointly with Derek Edwards, my present supervisor, that leads me to this discourse thesis. I am extremely grateful.

Arriving at Loughborough and surveying the years, over which I have been piecing together this doctoral thesis, I owe much to DARG (the Discourse and Rhetoric Group). It would be an invidious task to single out individuals from DARG. On this occasion, I prefer to construct it as a body. It is extremely difficult to describe adequately the unique atmosphere of DARG. It is a group which is non-hierarchical and where self-confidence can be built, as no contribution is rejected, however inane. The overall effect of this is that the corporate knowledge attained is of an extremely high standard (This, of course, is realist, evaluatory discourse, not at all in tune with the discourse of conversation/discourse analysis, although, even in the main body of the thesis, I shall not be able to avoid realist constructions, as they are very effective - see especially Chapter 7 for an explanation of their effectiveness). Many aspects of my thesis have been constructed initially in DARG (I wish here to convey the Bahktinian interpretation that sometimes we speak with the voices of others) and the inferior aspects of it I would prefer to attribute to myself alone.

As I want to thank DARG as a body, I shall have to move Jonathan Potter and Derek Edwards away from DARG to discuss them. Jonathan Potter is my Director of Studies and Derek Edwards my supervisor. Despite their formidable intellects (I am greatly influenced by their work, as many quotations within my thesis will demonstrate), I always feel that my work is respected and Derek Edwards, as my supervisor, has never seemed to doubt my ability to complete. I am grateful for the occasions when he has given me his time in a leisurely fashion when other demands must have been pressing. I am also grateful for his painstaking attention to detail in the reading of the thesis.

Remaining for a moment at the university, I would like to thank Loughborough University itself for hosting my thesis construction. In anticipation I would also like to thank my examiners, Neil Mercer and Dave Middleton, for giving time and energy to the reading of this thesis.

Moving away from the university system, I would like to thank my data participants, without whose co-operation there would be no thesis.
Last, but not least, come my family - my mother who has supported me throughout my study and taken upon herself some of the other tasks, for which I should have been responsible; my husband of twenty-eight years, Ron, who has supported me physically, mentally and emotionally, as no other could; my sons, Paul and Carl, who have shown immense interest in the topic of my thesis and discussed it with me on occasions at length.

With one massive speech act I thank them all.
TRANSCRIPTION SYMBOLS FOR OWN DATA

( . ) Pause of less than tenth of a second

( . 4 ) Pause measured in seconds

↑ Rising intonation; arrow precedes affected syllable

↓ Downward intonation; arrow precedes affected syllable

= The following speech has no pause preceding it

snow Sound is accentuated

SNOW Sound is louder than surrounding speech

*snow* Sound is quieter than surrounding speech

>snow< Sound is faster than surrounding speech

<snow> Sound is slower than surrounding speech

sno:w Preceding sound is stretched

sno:::w The more colons the more stretching

* Precedes harshness of voice

( ) Speech is indistinguishable

(snow) Analyst’s guess at indistinguishable data

snow- Abrupt ending of word

((laughs)) Analyst’s interpretation of events

[ Marks commencement of overlapping speech

, Continuing intonation, as in listing

? Rising intonation, as in questioning

. Falling, terminal pitch, as in ending

hhh Outbreath; number can vary to denote degree

.hhh Inbreath; number can vary to denote degree

* * * Omitted line or part of line of the turn
These transcription symbols are modelled on those developed by Gail Jefferson. Atkinson and Heritage (1984), pp. ix-xvi, provide a more exact replica of Jefferson's symbols. I only use the degree of transcription appropriate to my analysis; otherwise the transcript becomes cluttered and unreadable. Except in the Clive Anderson data, pseudonyms have been used for people and places to preserve anonymity.
DATA SOURCES

The initial classification for all my data is Ann Smith - AS e.g. AS/MP1

Source Number One - AS/CA
A television programme on BBC TV hosted by Clive Anderson, televised in 1992, entitled ‘Notes and Queries’. My data concerns a discussion between Clive Anderson and zoologist, Jessica Holmes. The issues covered are as follows:-
(a) The existence or otherwise of green mammals (This data begins on line 20)
(b) The memory of elephants (This data begins on line 195)
(c) The memory of goldfish (This data begins on line 247)
(d) Cats’ and dogs’ tails in relation to feelings (This data begins on line 414)
(e) Sense of humour in animals (This data begins on line 554)
The extract from the programme is of circa twenty minutes’ duration.

Source Number Two - AS/F
Two chalk-and-talk classroom lessons, held at the latter end of 1992 in a UK state junior school. The class is comprised of children aged seven and eight years. The lessons are on the subject of friction. The aim of the lessons is to order certain surfaces according to their frictional properties. The order is ‘democratically’ achieved through a voting procedure. The surfaces for the two lessons are as follows:

Lesson 1 - pebbles, grass, ice, shiny metal, carpet and tarmac.
Lesson 2 - sand, glass, wood, fur, shiny stone and snow.
Appendix F1 is extracted from the transcript of Lesson 1. Appendices F2 to F4 are extracted from the transcript of Lesson 2. The lessons are teacher-directed and last circa twenty minutes.

Source Number Three - AS/MP
A lunch-time discussion between the same teacher and four children from the same class as in Source Two (two girls and two boys). This data was also collected in the latter half of 1992. The discussion is concerned with the material properties (e.g. hardness, softness, flexibility malleability, transparency) of the following materials:-
(a) Paper (This data begins on line 24)
(b) Glass (This data begins on line 578)
The discussion is initiated by the teacher and lasts circa half an hour. Some written data was also produced on the same topic by the whole class. The extracts from the written data which I have chosen are on plastic and stone.

**Source Number Four - AS/TS**

Another lunch-time discussion with the same teacher and four children, this time in relation to bringing the senses (seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, smelling) to bear on certain aspects of the world:-

(a) Wind  
(b) Rainbow  
(c) Shadow  
(d) Snake

(This data begins on line 3)
(This data begins on line 490)
(This data begins on line 710)
(This data begins on line 1127)

The discussion is initiated by the teacher and lasts circa half an hour. This data was also collected in the latter half of 1992.

**Source Number Five - AS/FD**

A family discussion involving father, mother and two sons; one aged fifteen, the other aged ten. The family members have just viewed one of the 1992 Christmas Lecture series of programmes on BBCTV. The father and two sons are requested by the mother to discuss the programme. The data is too diffuse to separate into sections. Length of discussion - circa one hour.

I myself am a participant in Sources Two to Five; the teacher in Sources Two to Four and the mother in Source Five.
RESEARCH PROCEDURE

My thesis does not follow much of the traditional format of theses, so this section is an attempt to attend to various omissions.

There is no 'literature review' section as such and my method section, Chapter 2 (which I call 'Musings on Method'), does not conform to the usual format found in theses. 'Omissions' is perhaps a misleading word. You will find a wealth of literature referred to throughout this thesis and, in my method section, I hope that my musings will afford the reader deep insight into my 'analytical mind' and the principles governing it. Method and back-up literature pervade my thesis, constructed as warrants, justifications, blamings, etc. as the argument unfolds.

This non-conformity is a deliberate attempt to break down the idea that academics' talk and text is somehow different from the rest of talk and text. I wish to display that academic strictures arise from norms that the researcher, in academic writings, has to attend to, rather than a discourse that automatically envelopes the researcher within it and which cannot be infringed. Of course I am accountable for these 'omissions' and hence the appearance of this section, but that does not mean I cannot break with convention and succeed in my rhetorical enterprise (and in attaining my doctorate degree).

Of course my breaking-away from conformity is an illustration. There are many ways in which my thesis does conform to the norm, e.g. abstract, contents' list, introduction, eight chapters, conclusion, references, etc., and for these there is no account necessary.

Motivation for the thesis has, perhaps, not been addressed sufficiently in the main body of the thesis. The thesis developed from an initial interest in discourse and knowledge construction in schools, and then broadened to an interest in discourse and knowledge constructions in general - founded on the conversation analytical/ethnomethodological principle that talk and social practices in specialized settings are based in those of mundane and more general cultural patterns, such as everyday talk (Garfinkel, 1967; Heritage, 1984; Sacks, 1992).

Let us now look at method as method, another of my 'omissions' and let me begin at the beginning with my data collection. My data was oral talk collected from the sources described in the last section. The data was collected on tape-recorder and then transcribed in full by myself. On which criteria did I choose my data? I did not
discriminate greatly. I chose situations where the concern was the creation of knowledge (or, from the participants’ realist perspective, discovery of knowledge). My sources were ones available to me, as a teacher, a mother, a television-viewer, and ones where permission to tape-record would be readily forthcoming or not needed at all (the television programme). This latter consideration stopped me, for instance, standing with my tape-recorder in Post Office queues but my principled position would be that ‘construction-of-knowledge’ talk there, in those queues, would bear many similarities to elsewhere. Accountabilities might be different and so I cannot say it would be exactly the same. It is in attending to accountabilities and suchlike discursive moves that participants construct their own contexts.

Transcribing is the first step in analysis. The transcriber begins to see the inferential qualities of the data. After transcribing I was ready to reduce my data into numbered appendices within each data source, e.g. AS/FD1 (Ann Smith/Family Discussion 1). I was still unsure how each appendix would be used in the chapters. However, as the chapters took shape, the ideas, which had begun their life embryonically as I transcribed, began to flourish and the reduced data could be readily accessed to back them up.

Let us now take a look at what these chapters eventually developed into. Chapter 1 became a chapter ‘attacking’ the traditional educational model of knowledge and experience, which uses participants’ categories as analysts’ categories. Pupils are viewed as passive or active in the learning experience; it is an either/or situation. The pupils’ position is viewed as a reality, not a construct. Researchers line up in battle array against each other fighting out the ‘real truth’ of the situation. Chapter 2 became my ‘Musings on Method’, focusing on my analytical method and describing, in a circumlocutory fashion, my principles of analysis. Chapter 3 became a chapter which looked at the knowledge context; how knowledge is constructed and deconstructed and how accountabilities are addressed in knowledge contexts. Chapter 4 became a look at the personal side of experiential claims, as did Chapter 5; ‘I’ and ‘he/she/they’ claims were addressed in Chapter 4 and ‘we’ and ‘you’ claims in Chapter 5. Chapter 6 became a chapter on the organization of fact discourse in narratives. Chapter 7 became a chapter on legitimating experiential claims and Chapter 8 a chapter on undermining and discounting them.

The order in which the data extracts occur in the thesis is unimportant. They are introduced to back up theoretical claims and, if sequentially they are related to another
extract, that relationship is explained in the analysis. The positioning of each extract within its own appendix can be determined by the line numbers.

I have utilized the metaphor of plant growth to describe how my thesis grew. Perhaps I should reference the seed. I shall construct the seed as a split seed; my interest in knowledge-construction deriving from my experiences as a teacher and my love of stories and narratives.

Throughout my thesis-construction (a changed metaphor), I have read extensively, following the almost Bakhtinian belief (Bakhtin, 1981) that we speak with the voices of others as well as ourselves; centripetal and centrifugal talk. We have to appropriate the words of others to ourselves. This, of course, would not comply with my analytic stance. In that, the citing of other authors serves to back up your claims. References and quotations imply exactitudes in the presentation of others' research orientations and conclusions. They imply that others' opinions are not being glossed over.

At first appearance my thesis may appear lengthy but the data extracts in my thesis are generous in number and spaciously laid out, for ease of reading, and this results in proportionately more pages than is the norm.

This apologia for the thesis format and explanation of my empirical research proceedings could, no doubt, have embroidered its way throughout the very fabric of my thesis. However, placed in this preliminary section, it is lent a retrospective quality, removed from the unfolding (constructed as sequential) of my subjective ideas, a more objective reflection of my position and, hence, perhaps more persuasive to a reader that my thesis displays ideological and methodological cohesion.
INTRODUCTION: A THREE-PART LIST
REFLECTIONS ON LANGUAGE,
SUBJECT/OBJECT POSITIONING
& EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

This thesis was initiated by a desire to re-work the educational model of knowledge and experience which we are currently and constantly bombarded with in the media, from political circles and from traditional educational researchers. This model depicts pupils as being either passive or active recipients of knowledge, dependent on whichever side of the dialogic argument is being employed. According to the passive version the main possessor of knowledge within schools is the teacher. The pupils imbibe knowledge from the teacher through experiences, mainly within school, but accountabilities to the wider society have also to be addressed. The active version has apparently been the one that has had a part to play in many educational theories this century, but, in many of these theories, there are passive elements, as we shall discuss in Chapter 1. Within this version, individual pupil identity and entitlement to knowledge, for example, are constructed. This traditional model of experience, in both its passive and active forms, rests upon common-sense knowledge, our cultural resource, and utilizes participants’ discursive categories.

In this thesis I do not want to enter this debate and forward an authoritative counter-model, as that would be to seek out a single truth, and this thesis will not be set in such a realistic framework, being hopefully relativistic in style. However, I do want to pose a counter-argument, to de-construct the traditional model and to take a look at a proposed alternative. This alternative approach will be one wherein the notions of activity and passivity are flexibly employed by the participants; in other words a discursive model. In this discursive model, participants utilize the aforementioned traditional common-sense resources, (i) the resource that education is a passive experience and (ii) the resource of activity, of agency; of individual identity and individual entitlement to knowledge and experience. In this discursive model, however, it is often a case of both-and, rather than either-or. The constructions of activity and passivity are not mutually exclusive. When we look at discourse data, passivity and activity can be mutually supportive in bolstering knowledge claims. They are not always constructed as opposites, mutually exclusive and separate, as they are in many theories. In these two constructional orientations, both the interpretation and
objectivity of experience can be addressed by participants, sometimes admittedly as opposites (the interpretative aspect undermining the experience per se) but often, as we have said, as mutually supportive in warranting the experience.

In this Introduction I shall ponder further on the passive and active identity orientations, which participants inject into their discourse and I shall also contemplate the model of language which this thesis endorses against a backdrop of alternative versions (more of which will be said on this in Chapter 2). Language, in this thesis, will be regarded, not as a reflector of reality nor a reflector of psychological processes, but as a topic in itself, itself constituted in the realities it constructs.

The third element, which will be cropping up here in this Introduction, will be a sort of apologia for this thesis as a piece of educational research, which genus of research customarily concerns itself with critical research, a search for single truths and a belief that it can contribute to educational betterment. Before I embark on these three elements, I shall first say a few words about the thesis title.

**Title**

My title 'Telling Tales' could perhaps mislead the reader into thinking that only the data characters, who emerge from the pages of this thesis, Jessica, Clive, Lena, Eva, Andy, Fergus, the teacher, etc., are engaged in this pursuit of tale-telling. However, this thesis of mine is also a tale (albeit not often in an experiential mode), a story to display the organization of story-telling. Therefore, I make no apologies for a realist mode of presentation, as that is an appropriate mode for story-telling (see Chapter 7).

I hope I make it clear that here the word 'tales' is not synonymous with 'lies', as it undoubtedly is when children are exhorted 'not to tell tales'. In my tale, the objective status of reality is deconstructed and reality is reconstructed afresh in the stories of the data characters themselves (see especially Chapter 7), paralleled by the reconstruction of reality in my own writing.

The stories of the data characters are experiential claims of themselves and others, plus the data characters' claims about the experiences of others. These claims are formulated as past, present, potential, etc., i.e. not always in the past, as might be a common supposition. All these claims occur within frameworks of knowledge construction and the accountabilities that these entail.

My own story, as indicated, will tend to veer away from experiential anecdotes, as that is not the way academics conventionally write their reports, although you will
catch experiences sneaking in occasionally to warrant my claims and, as my own self appears in the data as teacher and mother, I am allowed my experiences there in another guise (see also my playlet in the Method chapter, Chapter 2).

**Language**

The debate which has taken place in educational circles about the passivity/activity of experience, has had a parallel in those areas of social science research which concern themselves with language. I shall herewith explore the way language is viewed within the traditional social sciences, while, at the same time, embarking upon my alternative viewpoint, which will prevail throughout the rest of the thesis. To re-iterate this alternative viewpoint, it is that language is a topic in itself, itself constituted in the realities it constructs. It is not a reflector of reality, nor of psychological processes; not a medium nor tool. Nor is it a pre-existent manipulator of people, nor a pre-existent agency constructor.

If you peruse a Latin or etymological dictionary, you will find that the word 'experience' is derived from the Latin 'experiri', 'to experience', which, we are taught at school, is a deponent verb, a verb with a passive form but an active meaning. As usual, this explanation is context-dependent. It camouflages the difficulties of translating words across languages. For the Romans with all their deities, etc., experiencing was primarily viewed as a passive encounter with fate. For ourselves, with the evaporation of all the gods and the rise in the concept of the individual, the agent of the experience mounts in importance, especially as regards how he/she positions him/herself in relation to a wide variety and diversity of knowledge claims. The identity of the experiencer has often to be worked up rhetorically, so that we can judge how valid his/her claims are, or how valid his/her experience would have been and sometimes how his/her knowledge and experience have been transmitted to the teller. Chapters 4 and 5 of this thesis, with a setting of the scene in Chapter 3 as regards the knowledge-construction context and the accountabilities therein, concentrate on this personal (subjective) orientation to experiential claims; including the relationship between the knower and experiencer and the teller (the correlation can be to one, two or three people, of course). What the experiencer brings to the experience is often here displayed. The interpretation of the experience has to be in the correct hands (or brain). Also the teller has often to be shown to have a close relationship with the experiencer.
Chapter 3 deals, among other issues, with accountability displays because these are important for determining, by the personal and/or objective orientational use of the participants, whether the situation is calling for an elimination or a promotion of alternative versions of knowledge; if elimination then there is a tendency towards passivity and/or the notion of the universality of experiences; if promotion then a tendency towards activity and the notion of the individuality of experiences. However, we do not always evidence this contrast between the personal and objective dimensions of warranting knowledge claims. They often conceptually boil down to the same thing. Also, empirically, they can both warrant experiential and knowledge claims.

Let not the previous preamble about the Romans direct you to assuming that I think language is deterministic, e.g. an active verb would necessitate an active experience; a passive verb a passive one. No, the Romans were just addressing their accountabilities to their culture, which could be, and indeed were, countered. Mine is not a position of ‘package deals’, such as Mühlhäusler and Harré’s (1990) when they write in their work concerning language (especially pronouns) and reality:

“It is our belief, and indeed the psychological hypothesis upon which the studies in this volume are based, that compulsory pronominal ‘package deals’ can be seen to influence the degree that a speaker’s attention is lavished on this or that aspect of the material and social environments.” (pp. 5 & 6)

This idea of ‘package deals’ is too rigid, structuralist and causal a model to be employed in this thesis, which will be written with the assumption that language is extremely flexible and viable for argumentative and rhetorical purposes, as I hope later sections will endorse. I would like to display an aspect of the ‘package deal’ premise’s rigidity. Part of Mühlhäusler and Harré’s ‘package deal’ contention is that pronouns must have linguistic referents. ‘I’, to Mühlhäusler and Harré, is not really a pronoun because of its lack of a referent. However, I have found that ‘I’ can be effective rhetorically if built up referentially. (This can often be a joint endeavour between participants - see Example 1). On the other side of the coin, the other pronouns can be equally effective unreferenced, as we can see in the narrative organization of Example 2. (See more on the linguistic notion of referents in Chapter 5).

In Example 1, the build-up to the ‘I’ references it. Clive Anderson, on his television programme, in 1992, entitled ‘Notes and Queries’, a programme concerned with scientific phenomena, introduces a guest who later tells her elephant story to
display animal humour. Her introduction affords her a privileged position to launch into her autobiographical story. I am not pretending this is the only referent the ‘I’ receives. It is just an example that ‘I’ can be referenced:

**Example 1**

Extract Intro.1 (Source AS/CA beg)

1  Clive: Let’s turn to some more serious questions
2          about real animals
3          and I have with me (.)
4  Doctor Jessica Holmes
5          a zoologist
6          familiar to BBC radio and TV viewrs.

Extract Intro.2 (Source AS/CA6)

569 Jessica: * * * I once watched a television presenter
570          who was standing
571          in front of an elephant enclosure
572          trying to do a link
573          and he got the link wrong

Clive affords Jessica the intellectual and professional kudos to launch into her ‘I’ experiential claim. The ‘I’ does not stand alone. The inferences that can be drawn from this story have partially been constructed in prior discourse. See Chapter 4 for more explanation of this.

On the other hand, in the narrative organization of Example 2, we see unreferenced ‘shes’. Lena tells about a drama on children’s television:

**Example 2**

Extract Intro.3 (Source AS/TS3)

873 > when they were at the table
874 if you watched it yesterday
875 they were at the table < (.)
876 and she: was (.) > sitting at the table

5
and the oth < (. )
and the nice one
had to (. ) um go underneath the table (. )
so that she wouldn’t know
there (was) two of them (. )
and she went (. )
and she: (. )
and she said “I don’t like this (dinner)”
and she .hh (. )
and (. ) she got up
> and said “I’m not eating it”

There are three ‘she’s in the story - an old woman and two girls. The only ‘she’ that is referenced here is

and the nice one

when Lena is emphasizing that there were two girls:-

there (was) two of them (. )

For the rest she allows the story and the ‘she’s to flow along linguistically unreferenced. Lena and the three other pupils (especially Andy) are here constructing togetherness in the presence of the teacher. A collective television-viewing is being constructed, where no explanations are needed about who was who. The identity of the ‘she’s is unimportant in that the ‘she’s are making no claims to experience nor knowledge. On the other hand, in the knowledge context about the insubstantiveness or otherwise of shadows, the two-ness of the girls is important. This complicated latter point, i.e. why the two-ness of the girls is important, will be further explained later in this thesis (Chapter 6. You will also find lines 886 and 887, plus a subsequent part of the extract, in Chapter 5, when we look at ‘you’ and ‘we’ claims. We again return to this story in Chapter 7, a chapter which concerns itself with the legitimation of experiential claims).
Let us return to the starting point of all this; my contention that language is not deterministic and rigidly restraining, as regards culture; rather it is flexible and sensitive to contextual situations. Mühlhäusler and Harré (1990) have been influenced by the linguistic-relativity thesis of Sapir (1949 [written in 1929]; and 1951) and by the linguistic-transference-of-culture thesis of Vygotsky (1986 [written in 1934]) but this view of language, commendable as these theories are in that they view language as cultural and at least partially constructing the world, makes little room for social change. They downgrade the active, personal, dimension of language (even though Vygotsky, together with many other educational researchers this century, stresses individual psychology). Although, admittedly, words have cultural connotations that go with them (Barthes, 1974) and certain discourses are more rhetorically successful in our culture than others (I refrain from using the term ‘dominant’ because that has connotations of power), there are always counter-arguments to be employed (see Billig, 1987). These counter-arguments, admittedly, do often have to be presented in a more elaborated and marked fashion. For example, Pomerantz (1984b) shows how a preferred-action turn shape differs from a dispreferred-action turn shape (p. 64), because the former is normatively culturally expected. (However, see the section on argumentation in Chapter 3 of this thesis, when disagreements are not marked.) What I am stressing here is that we are not compelled to perform the preferred action all the time.

This deterministic view of the influence of language over culture is the other side of the coin to the common conception that our culture makes our language, that language is referential; not so deterministic a perspective, if we view culture as man-made. From this latter perspective, language references outside cultural structures and procedures. This is not a popular position nowadays for social scientists to hold, as they strive to divorce themselves from the object-word correspondence of the natural sciences.

Other approaches, in social sciences, however, also counter determinism. They construct humans as agentive beings, capable of creativity and social change.

In this thesis I hope to move away from a pre-occupation with language as being either a tool to form human passivity, or a medium which can be creatively manipulated by human activity. I shall not enter this activity/passivity-nature-of-language debate. I shall leave the active/passive issue as something for psychologists, etc. to argue over and to model. In Discursive Psychology (Edwards and Potter, 1992a), which is the
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approach I adopt for my thesis, the whole active/passive issue is approached as a participants’ oriented-to concern. This opportunely leads us on to the next section of my Introduction, a section on passivity/activity away from the language topic. Employing the tenets of Discursive Psychology, Piagetian, for example, practices in the classroom become something we can study, not something with which we ourselves take issue.

Passivity/Activity

Just as we can construct language as manipulating us or we can construct ourselves as manipulating language, if we move away from topicalizing language and look at how experiences are constructed, people are often constructed as being passive or active participants in their experiences.

This thesis in general will concern itself with the reconciliation of these two aspects of experience which are often viewed as opposites. I could variously call these aspects (or discourse orientations) person/object, interpretation/reality, or agency/passivity orientations. They are all basically the same and attend to how the person(s) and the world are positioned in relation to each other in the recounting of an experience. The dichotomy of activity/passivity is a prevalent notion within our culture. Many models of experience and philosophies look on activity and passivity as opposing elements, the one undermining the other. My contention, however, will be that they can work together to validate experiences, mutually sustaining each other, as the experience is invoked and legitimated. The invocation of an experiential claim often conjures up an active orientation to experience, as the linkage of knowledge and appropriate experience displays the identity of the person making the link. Also, as we shall see, the transmission of knowledge is often depicted in this initial invocation. This, then, is what I shall call, the ‘personal orientation’ (see Chapters 4 and 5). In tune with what was said previously about the flexibility of language, I would have the reader note that, in attending to the personal or active orientation, the speaker can remove agency and imbue passivity, as in the Wooffitt extract (1991) later in this Introduction.

The legitimation of the experiential claim often conjures up, what I shall call, an ‘objective orientation’ on the part of the experiencer. The gods and fate may not play such a large part in our lives as they did in Roman times but, for knowledge to be imparted, we have to experience a common reality, ‘out there’ and consistent over time and space. We have to be the passive recipients of ‘the truth’. (In the flexibility of
language, this can, of course, be disputed). The orientation is to the world outside of the person and to the construction of the person/world barrier or dichotomy. In the cut and thrust of rhetoric, when the objectivity of external features is brought into question, if reality disjunctures appear between accounts, their threat to the concept of metaphysical reality can be discounted, among other devices, by non-standardizing the individual or non-standardizing the time, the place, etc. (see Pollner, 1975 and 1987, on reality disjunctures).

Viewed from this perspective, the active and passive orientations are not necessarily opposites. They can be often mutually enabling, as we have seen in the mention of Pollner in the previous paragraph (see also the Wooffitt, 1991, extract later in this Introduction. Also, I hope the reason for this assertion of mine will become clearer when, in Chapter 2, we take a look at ‘repertoire’ discourse analysis, wherein, to my mind, the placing of boundaries around discourses prohibits, in the analysis, a consideration of this mutual interchange). We must not think, however, that the person (subject) of an experience has to be undermined for experience to gain its existence and validity. In the flexibility of speech, enhancing the individual status of personae and/or constructing their universal status, etc. can accredit experiences.

The two-sidedness of the coin, personal and objective orientations, is very fluid and flexible in speech and the two co-exist quite happily. As I have implied, the personal orientation can often be aligned to agency and the objective orientation to passivity on the part of the experiencer, but not always, as we shall see.

Widdicombe and Wooffitt (1995) write on the topic of agency in their researching of subcultural identities:-

".. agency is thoroughly ingrained in this approach in several ways without equating it with universal underlying processes which produce discrete acts. It is, for example, built into the analysis, and it is also addressed through the ways that agency is a participants’ concern: .... Finally, agency is implicated in our emphasis on social activity as an ongoing and continuous process within which subsequent acts are enabled and given impetus by prior acts.” (p. 22)

So, agency has a bearing on my own story as well as on those of the participants. My interests and expertise in educational matters are constructed, but so is my passivity. For example, I construct the data as coming at me, a force not to be denied. Both help to legitimate the thesis.
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Ever since Plato’s philosophical division of appearance and reality (which, of course, regards appearance as delusionary), and suchlike philosophies, this happy, peaceful co-existence of the person and the world breaks down in the sphere of disciplines and sub-disciplines. Rigor mortis has a tendency to set in. They are no longer participants’ resources but take on epistemological realities. Either activity, as in phenomenology and indeed some sorts of constructionism, which regard the self as something ‘real’ or existentialist; or passivity, which has connotations of individuals being disempowered, as in traditional sociology, is taken on board and the ‘opposing’ component discarded. People have either to be victims of the world or world constructors.

Cognitive psychologists often separate the two components discretely and temporally - the world is received and processed mentally in a passive fashion and this then activates the person in an agentive fashion, until his/her mental-set (schema) is changed by further world receptions. This is the case with the renowned educational psychologist, Piaget, as we shall see in Chapter 1. Activity is downgraded here, as it is the result of prior passivity to universal forces. We are constructed as the sum of our experiences, processed by mental machinery appropriate to our age group. We would all be the same if subjected to the same experiences throughout our lifetime. Our agency depends only upon our passive experiences.

Lakoff’s (1987) ‘experiential realism’, too, undermines agency, as here people are victims, not so much of external reality, but of their own internal reality - chemicals, hormones and the like. Again, to depict people as at the mercy of their chemistry can be an extremely useful ‘in situ’ device in discursive contexts, e.g. to explain experiential incongruities between people, but it is not something to build a theory of the world around, to the exclusion of all other rhetorical possibilities. Edwards (1997), after a discussion of ‘experiential realism’, ends Chapter 9 with these words:-

“It is decontextualization from situated practices that makes culture look like grammar, discourse like cognition, versions like theories.” (p. 259)

I would add,

“and human agency or passivity look like world views.”

I am not denying that, in discursive accounts, active orientations and passive ones are sometimes kept separate, but one is not prioritized ‘a priori’ over the other by analysts, as in the traditional model I have just recounted. Of course, participants can
prioritize one or the other but that is their prerogative. For example, in the Wooffitt
(1991) extract later in this Introduction, activity and agency on her part are
downgraded by the participant and this highlights the objectivity of her experience and
its universal interest.

In Chapter 1, I contend that the traditional educational model of experience
separates and dichotomizes one orientation towards experience and another, not from
participants' perspectives, but in its analyses. However, this reification of the two
orientations, as separate entities, is not confined to traditional approaches. Many
'modern' approaches display either an active or passive orientation towards experience;
as if the other construct were not present. Even in my own sphere of discourse
analysis, 'repertoire' research has often a one-sided orientation, be it active or passive,
in its analysis, highlighting one orientation and ignoring the other, as they are both
contextually deployed by participants. Often too, in this kind of research, context is
constructed and categorized in sweeping brush-strokes (indeed it too is reified) and
subtle nuances in the contextual situation are ignored, leaving the interplay of these
personal and objective orientations obscured. This will be discussed in the Method
chapter, Chapter 2.

Even in the realm of conversation analysis, we find views, such as the following
from Pomerantz (1984a), which totally undermine the personal orientation of
experiences:-

"A feature of describing one's basis is that smaller claims are made than in
asserting an objective state of affairs. In describing what is directly
experienced, speakers are strictly accountable for representing only their
experiences while they imply that these experiences are more or less typical. In
reporting what others have said, speakers are strictly accountable for citing
accurately, not for the views cited."

(p. 607)

This is certainly sometimes the case but, if the personal orientation of the experience
were only produced in order to undermine the universal status of the experiencer, then
the huge variations that we find in discursive accounts would be considerably reduced.
I hope to show, in Chapters 4 and 5, that the identities of the experiencer and the
knower are often worked up in preceding discourse and, far from an undermining of
the status of the experiencer always being evidenced, his/her status is often enhanced
through his/her constructed professions, his/her relations with others, his/her
membership of privileged groupings, his/her commonality and communality with
others, etc. - an extremely rich and infinite array. We have already evidenced something
of that in the ‘I’ construction of Jessica in the data extract, Intro.1, in this Introduction.

Also participants often do not just imply that the experiences are typical (I am
still attending to the details of the Pomerantz, 1984a, quotation); the legitimisation of the
experience from a universalistic perspective is often strongly carried out (see Chapter
7). However, at the stage of the invocation of the experiences, there is a strong
distinction drawn between actually having experienced, as the participant, or someone
closely related (not necessarily blood-related) is constructed as having done, and
having the potentiality to experience, which the whole world has. The general ‘you’
experience in Chapter 5 is an example where this distinction is not made. The
experience is potential and so the personal and objective orientations (the reality
available to all) come together and the individual identities of the knower and teller lie
outside of the potential experiencer. The experiencer, from a state of being a tabula
rasa will learn through this one experience. The interpretation of the experience is not
deemed important as it is, say, when we have a well-constructed ‘I’ formulation.
Admittedly, the two can also come together when the participant creates his/her
individual identity by references to past experiences.

I would now like to illustrate how, in the warranting of experiences, the personal
and objective orientations can complement each other, as well as oppose, by including
the piece of data that I have already mentioned, where Wooffitt (1991) explains the ‘I
was just doing X... when Y’ device. Although, here, the person is constructed as
inactive, other complements can be achieved by an active person depiction. The data is
as follows:-

Extract Intro.4 (Source 5)

1 HY I was in that state between (.)
sleeping and waking I was not
asleep (. ) but ya know in that
very relaxed (. ) state (. )

5 

a:nd I was >thinkin’ to myself<
a:u:GHhh: I’m cold (. ) y’know

7 

a:nd the bedclothes (. )
came up from the bottom of the bed
Lines 1 to 6 consist of the personal orientation; lines 7 to 11 of the objective orientation. The first orientation makes the subsequent orientation more effective. The personal orientation prepares the way for the objectivity of the paranormal experience. Many analytic approaches divorce the two orientations, concentrating on one and ignoring the other. My contention is that this is invalid. Like magnets, they work together, attracting or repelling the other. Many ethnomethodological studies display to us this interaction.

In this extract the experiencer constructs herself in the experience as follows: she was not asleep (lines 2 and 3) i.e. it was not a dream; she was ‘very relaxed’ (line 4), i.e. very receptive and not stressed, therefore not subject to delusions. Lines 5 and 6 are almost a handover from the personal to the objective orientation:-

The thinking is internal but the coldness, although experienced internally, is hinted at coming from an external source. The ‘y’ know’ on line 6 confirms our analysis that the objective orientation, potentially available to everyone, is going into operation.

Then the external world takes over, in lines 7 to 11, and the teller of the tale is left powerless and ineffective. In this instance, she addresses her individuality and agency and undermines the latter, in order to convey a sense of her passivity and the objectivity of her experiences.

**Educational Research**

This, then, almost concludes my Introduction and we shall soon move on to Chapter 1 and the traditional model of experience but, before we do so, I would just like to say a few words about relativism and to contemplate briefly the implications of this thesis as a piece of educational research. Most educational ethnographic qualitative research is critical of some aspect of the status quo in schooling and pinpoints the way to improvements. My thesis is not like that. It deconstructs all experience and knowledge
as external and internal realities (not just some so-called ‘inferior’ versions of science which e.g. Collins, 1981, attacks) but it does not devalue them. As discursive constructions they are useful, even essential, to the organization of our world. Their discursive unfolding is elegant, beautiful and satisfying to behold (or indeed to harken to!). I would agree with Potter (1996c) when he writes:-

"...the danger of too strong an emphasis on criticism is that it can easily turn into arrogance where researchers assume that they know what is wrong in some domain, and research can become a device for passing off that assumption as research finding."

(p. 230)

I have met people who have been upset by Edwards, Ashmore and Potter’s (1994) deconstruction of realist arguments about death. They feel that this paper undermines the concept of death. It does not. Quite the reverse. When "there is no per se" (p. 37) death can have no inferior status to anything else. We are free to revere it as much as we like. Relativists, just as much as realists, are in tune with death as human, discursive participants. In a relativist approach, death has the potential to be foregrounded, death experiences formulated and re-formulated and all their poignancy constructed, perhaps even better than in a realist formulation, which concentrates on the deaths of relations, etc. as single past experiences, which can be ‘forgotten’ perhaps. (There have recently [September, 1997] been all the media presentations on the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, all conducted discursively, containing arguments and counter-arguments on many topics associated with her death.) Death, knowledge, experience, the self (Cromby and Standen, 1994 and 1995, fail to understand how important the self is to relativists) personal histories, religion, etc., all these are held to be important by our culture and, in a relativist approach, are thus certainly not ignored; they are highlighted. The moral ground does not belong exclusively to realists. Deriding the deaths of individuals or removing the facticity of death is certainly a way open to us in discourse but, within this culture, such an argument would not make much headway, as the emotive upsurge against relativism by people who are mistaken about relativistic aims, aptly displays.

No, this thesis does not aim to disparage work in schools or the knowledge constructed therein, as many realist, ethnographic research works do. However, I would like to think it had some kind of critical potential. Potter (1996c) suggests three types of critical potential for discourse work:-
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1) Ad hoc practical criticism - to show how to argue etc. more effectively. Potter, however, concludes that a) people are extremely skilled at this already and b) researchers might be aiding the powerful to wield more power.

2) Critical Discourse Analysis with a capital ‘C’ - discourse analysis interwoven with theoretical and historical analysis. As Potter himself writes: -

   “... by its very nature such critical work is often undermining some versions of social arrangements while simultaneously presupposing others.” (p. 231)

3) Reflexive criticism

   “... it tends to be corrosive to all authoritative accounts, including that of the current analyst and writer.” (p. 232)

I, in accord with Potter, would align myself with this critical outlook number 3. I feel it is important to point out the constructed nature of one’s own account and, in doing so, help to remove any impression that this is a privileged version, although I shall rhetorically try to make it so! Perhaps the time is ripe to celebrate uncertainties, inconsistencies and conflicts of opinion (Potter uses the term ‘tension’ on p. 232). We, as researchers, should cast off our dogmatism, our authoritarian stance and don the garb of humility, as we struggle to make sense of and order our existence, along with the rest of humankind. However, it must not be forgotten by the reader that the more I reflect on the constructed nature of my own writing, the more I warrant the views expressed in this thesis - that realities are discursively produced. In other words, reflexivity suits a relativistic, deconstructionist stance (see subsection on Reflexivity in Chapter 2) and could be viewed as being introduced to promote it.

Now let us move to Chapter 1 and a look at traditional models of experience within educational research.
CHAPTER ONE

THE TRADITIONAL EDUCATIONAL MODEL OF EXPERIENCE

This will be the shortest chapter in my thesis, as its purpose will not be to relay an in-depth account of educational theories this century; rather it is included in the thesis to afford a flavour of how analysts use participants' methods to explain education and learning and, in so doing, make themselves objects of study. Although the aim of this chapter is to create an overall picture, I do touch on specified influential educational theories, explaining the theorists' positions and providing elementary resumés of the theories themselves, as I am aware that many of my readers will be unfamiliar with the progression of educational research this century.

Common-Sense Assumptions

I shall argue that educational theorists this century, by separating the personal and objective orientations of participants in their talk, in a way participants often do, almost totally ignore the potential integration of these orientations, which participants sometimes, in addition to the separation of these orientations, attend to. I would argue that this has a potentiality to imbue participant agency and passivity into theories; either an interpreted world or a 'real' world; a world of people as people approaching (or even creating) experiences, or of objects waiting to be experienced. There is thus a tendency to proclaim the existence, in a material sense, of things over people, or people over things. Passivity and activity, instead of resources, become topics. Both, in my view, should be regarded as constructs. However, because external reality is an older cultural resource than the mind (see Danziger, 1997, on naming the mind; how Psychology found its language), the former has often to remain intact even in theories that are personally orientated. The construction of universal experience, categories of individuals (categorized by social class, age, etc.), etc. leads us to assume agency and interpretation on the part of humankind, a kind of collective agency, but not on the part of individuals. This then partially preserves the notion of an external reality, albeit more ephemeral. Individuality is still there as an idiosyncratic opt-out if reality begins to waver (see Pollner, 1975 and 1987).

My means of assay into this chapter will be to present common-sense thinking about experience and to display this thinking in a, at times, quasi historical setting to show its rhetorical nature and how it has influenced educational research. I hope thus
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to show how participants’ categories have been adopted by researchers. This debunking of prevalent assumptions in educational research will be an adequate framework within which to approach the rest of this thesis. I can then move on to demonstrate how the notions of the personal and objective are used in discursive situations, as discourse practices, as ethnomethodological accomplishments.

Experience as an Object, Universally Accessible
Experience has always played a major part in academics’ thinking about how knowledge is assimilated in the brain: be it experience gained in actual educational encounters or outside; experience through physical, sensory or linguistic channels; experience of the learner him/herself or of relevant others. Schools in their initiation were instigated as institutions of social control and thus experiences outside of that institution were regarded as at best irrelevant, at worst dangerous intrusions. As educational aims have widened and as individual experiences have become more diffuse with the proliferation of the media and the onset of the technological ‘revolution’, experiences from outside of educational settings have become more acceptable to the learning process and also the teacher’s omniscient position as the possessor of knowledge has been substantially reduced (although many sociologists and critical theorists would still consider educational establishments as organizations of teacher domination and control). Knowledge has thus become more individualistic, as opposed to being the possession of all members of the school class in equal measure.

Experiences are viewed as cumulative. Their influences are seldom lost. They develop the mind. Even in ordinary parlance, which, I hope to show, bequeaths legacies to all academic disciplines, it is widely agreed that we learn through our experiences. Education is viewed as a developmental, linear, uniform process and thus came the birth of developmental psychology in educational circles. Older children are regarded as more knowledgeable, more logical, more imaginative, more symbolic in their thought than younger children. Why is this so? Their experiences, of course, have been more numerous. The National Curriculum reflects this common-sense attitude towards education. We are here approaching the personal orientation of experience, but note that learners are grouped in age categories, rather than viewed as individuals. For children of similar age, experiences are universally accessible.

Knowledge as an educational possession, gained by experience, is also a subject for evaluation. Not all experience and knowledge are beneficial for educational
purposes. The knowledge that our experience is meant to harness has been categorized in the light of objectives and questioning (Bloom, 1956) and also the establishments of curricula (e.g. the National Curriculum in Britain, previously mentioned) are an attempt to organize our knowledge. However, when we talk about knowledge in schools, we are usually referring to the knowledge appertaining to the natural world, although other types of knowledge (e.g. knowledge of the social world, knowledge of signs and symbols) do indeed play a part.

**Experience as a Personal Possession, Collectively Owned**

However, this metaphor of the brain as a sponge soaking up experiences has been too simplistic for many twentieth century psychologists, especially as it did not explain why all children in the same class, of the same age, were not uniformly clever. This problem resulted in sociologists studying home environments, as we shall see later in this chapter when we look at Bernstein, but psychologists constructed brain complexities to explain this phenomenon. Their portrayal became that the mind processes our experiences creating various representations and schemata which are in turn changed and transformed by subsequent experiences. In educational research circles this was a more common line of pursuit than that of the rationalists, mentioned in the following quotation by Bruner, who considered the mind as a direct reflector of reality.

"Surely since the Enlightenment, if not before, the study of mind has centred principally on how man achieves a 'true' knowledge of the world. Emphasis in this pursuit has varied, of course: empiricists have concentrated on the mind's interplay with an external world of nature, hoping to find the key in the association of sensations and ideas, while rationalists have looked inward to the powers of mind itself for the principles of right reason. The objective, in either case, has been to discover how we achieve 'reality', that is to say, how we get a reliable fix on the world, a world that is, as it were, assumed to be immutable and, as it were, there to be observed." (Bruner, 1991)

Instead of a sponge we now have a Darwinian adaptation-to-environment model, modelled on the individual rather than the species. Piaget (e.g. 1928; 1929; 1932, the latter in connection with moral judgement; 1955, on the conception of reality; 1970, the latter a brief synopsis; also with Inhelder, 1969) originally a zoologist, has probably been the psychologist who has had the most influence over ordinary classroom teaching, and hands-on activities for schoolchildren, which have become popular in the
latter half of this century, have mainly been a direct result of his theories. The Plowden Report in the 1960s (DES, 1967), to advise on practices in primary schools, stated:

"Piaget and Inhelder have described the emergence of mental structures in a manner strongly reminiscent of developing brain or body structures; the mental stages follow in a sequence, for example, which may be delayed, but not altered. There seems good reason to suppose that Piaget's successive stages depend on progressive maturation or at least progressive organisation of the cerebral cortex. For the cognitive stage to emerge, brain maturation is probably necessary, though not, of course, sufficient. Without at least some degree of social stimulus the latent abilities may never be exercised, and indeed the requisite cells may go undeveloped." (Vol. 1, p. 11)

(It is interesting to reflect on what the status of schooling would be if brain maturation on its own were deemed sufficient for cognitive growth!)

The 'mental stages' referred to in this quotation are (i) the sensorimotor stage (0 to 18 months) (ii) the concrete operational stage (7 to 11 years), preceded by the pre-operational period and (iii) the formal operational stage (11 years onwards).

Piagetian principles still abound in our schools in the 1990s, although in recent decades scepticism has been directed towards his work by critics who focus on his unilinearity, his non-specificity of domain and his strict derivational approach. Donaldson (1978), in one critique, investigated how the interactional setting between Piaget and the child, which Piaget ignores, could influence the results of his experiments.

The problem with Piaget, from the point of view of this thesis, is that he separates the active and the passive. His whole proposition relies upon this separation, so that the external can become the internal by a cognitive process of assimilation and accommodation. Piaget views children as active constructors of knowledge, the knowledge coming from external sources. Although Piaget's theories initially were concerned with an 'egocentric' child, he later had a place, in his theories, for social action, where the talk of the other was also viewed as the external and had to go through the same cognitive process of assimilation and accommodation.

As we have seen, Piaget's theories were criticizable because he paid little attention to language, either its use in the learning process or its role in his experiments. (Of course, for discourse/conversation analysts, as we shall discover, the learning process, as it is usually understood, is too cognitive a concept to be
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entertained.) Vygotsky (1986, originally 1934; 1978), a Russian, whose ideas were for many years suppressed under the Marxist regime, introduced the idea of language as a mediator in the learning process and he developed the idea of the social formation of the mind (see Wertsch, 1985); knowledge being nurtured in learners by competent adults and/or by children more competent than the learner, via language and social interaction. Marxism suppressed Vygotsky’s ideas, as they were judged to concern themselves with the mental and intellectual aspects of life, rather than with the manual and the practical. His emphasis on language was viewed by the Soviets as a kind of bourgeois ‘idealism’, which ought to be replaced by an emphasis on ‘work’, on physical, social, productive activity. Hence the later development of ‘Activity Theory’ by Leont’ev (e.g. 1981), one of Vygotsky’s followers. As with Piaget, Vygotsky, too, was concerned with how learners made external knowledge, in this case, explicitly cultural knowledge, their own. The idea that internal and external knowledge could be one and the same thing, both conceptually and also empirically, as bases for knowledge claims (as described later in this chapter), was not entertained by him nor his followers.

Again, in this second traditional view (that of Vygotsky), we have a separation of the personal and the objective; culture being passed on from generation to generation. The difference in teachers would create variabilities across children, as would the ‘zone of proximal development’ of each child, i.e. his/her current potential. Educationalists have recently embraced Vygotsky (see Mercer, 1995, pp. 4 to 6, 71 to 73, 79 and 90), as his view of learning made important the role of the teacher, whose importance Piaget had minimalized. Indeed the nationally to-be-implemented ‘Literacy Hour’ (September, 1998) for Primary Schools is based heavily upon Vygotsky’s beliefs.

We can see that, both for Piaget and Vygotsky, the external world, either materialistic or cultural, was real enough. However, both were eager that the learner had some sort of agency on the world and made knowledge his/her own. In the latter of the two cases, the result was a convenient marriage of Sociology and Psychology.

Experience as External and Differential

The theories of people such as Piaget and Vygotsky, because of their collective orientation, still did not carry enough variables to explain adequately why some individual children failed to accrue knowledge and were unable to operate successfully in a learning environment, despite their exposure to innumerable experiences and innumerable teachers. Children within the subsets, created by Piaget and Vygotsky, had
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to be subsetted further. Many books and articles in the late sixties and seventies addressed this aspect of failure (e.g. Holt, 1969) and sociological factors were often deemed to be at work. Sociology was investigating the external, while Psychology became more and more concerned with these already-discussed internal, personal, nevertheless, in the main, universal, mechanisms for processing experience as a given. In sociological studies, the school as an institution, the family as an institution, wider society, all these came under a critical eye. Macro-sociology was in its heyday. The individual was a passive victim of all these societal organizations. Adolescents were regarded as driven into sub-cultural groups to escape from 'the system', a system of structures detrimental to individuality. (However, for another version of youth sub-cultures see Widdicombe and Wooffitt, 1995)

A leading sociologist, Bernstein, (1971, 1973, 1975, 1990) blamed the class system for the failure of some children in schools and tried to prove that children from working-class backgrounds were disadvantaged because of their lack of an 'elaborated code' of language, which was assumed to prevail among middle-class children and to be the language of the school system itself. By Bernstein’s insistence on the existence or lack of an 'elaborated code' in a child, he, although a sociologist, was attending to psychological ideas about learning. Piaget and Vygotsky viewed children as tabulae rasaе as they approached the learning experience, but Bernstein was pointing out that their minds had been formed already. School was not their first experience of life. The 'elaborated code', upon which Bernstein concentrated his research efforts, was not just a superficial style of talking but influenced the modes of thought, of which the child was capable. Bernstein’s aim was to advocate a change in the educational system:–

"The context in which children learn is a middle-class one. Should we try to coax them to that 'standard', or seek what is valid in their own lives?"

(Bernstein, 1970; extract from article on pp. 344 to 347)
but his good intentions misfired and his attitude was regarded as condescending and demeaning. The reaction in many quarters to his work was violent because of the inferior status he seemed to be inferring on working-class language and culture and because of his deterministic attitude to working-class children. depicted as almost trapped within their language and culture. Labov (1969, 1972a, 1972b), especially, objected strongly to Bernstein’s portrayal of working-class language and tried to show, by naturalistic examples of language (Bernstein had used idealized examples), that language was a style of talking and that the language of black Americans had plenty of
traditional model of experience

logical thinking within it. The advocates of standard English in schools, ranged against those of non-standard English in schools reflect this Labov/Bernstein debate (see Honey, 1983, for an argument promoting the use of standard English). Also from such roots has grown a profound interest in children's dialects (e.g. Trudgill, 1978. 1983a and 1983b).

Again, we see in Bernstein too an attempt to explain individual difference but again we see that, away from a discursive model of experience, the potentiality of the experiences he portrays leads to categorizations and universal experiences within social class sets.

The Irrelevance of Experience: a Promotion for Universality

Against this backdrop of interest in the social development of language were the psycholinguists, headed primarily by Chomsky (1957, 1965, 1968). From the perspective of this thesis, the interesting point about the psycholinguists is their lack of interest in experience. Concerned only with language learning rather than more general learning, their prediction was that language developed over time, like biological growth, rather than being structured by experience. Chomsky emphasized the universal individualism of language, embedded in biological, innate factors crossing all cultures, completely disavowing the notion that the specific experiences that individuals have will have any great impact on their eventual possession of the same basic language - and, of course, no impact at all on their initial possession of an innate, universal, language faculty. Language, with its 'fundamental' deep structures and its 'superficial' transformations, reflects a hierarchy of reality and this suffices as a model without any account being taken of individualistic orientations. Chomsky's aim was political; to break down boundaries and dispense with the notion of races and cultures.

The External Directly Triggering the Internal

Most of the approaches outlined in this chapter are cognitive research paradigms but an orientation towards behaviourism is never dead in school research - these days usually in order to disparage it. The essential features of behaviourism, which are stimulus, response, reinforcement, are echoed in the findings of Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) in their 'discourse analytic' study of teacher-pupil interaction. Stimulus, response, reinforcement are paralleled by initiation, reply and evaluation. As we shall see in the next subsection, this linguistic discourse analysis is not the discourse analysis that I
Traditional Model of Experience

would advocate; its emphasis being on actuality, countability and a sense of structural determinism rather than on language as a resource, accountability and dynamicism. The Sinclair and Coulthard version of Discourse Analysis seeks to define a grammar of speech acts, rather than to investigate how talk’s specific content performs local, situated actions. In other words I would argue that the child can always break free from this restrictive constraint, but in so doing becomes accountable and might have to introduce certain discursive strategies to appease and restore the sense of social organization (Garfinkel, 1967 and 1972). The IRE, from my standpoint, would be regarded, not as a categorical procedure, but as a normative one.

The concept of known-information questions too (Mehan, 1986) and ‘ritual knowledge’ (see Chapter 3 of this thesis) reflect a belief that in our schools a behaviourist style of learning is found rather than a cognitive one.

Educational Research Nowadays

The legacy of the aforementioned researchers still is evident in today’s research. Much of present-day educational research treats knowledge and experience as objects which have a pre-existence prior to their ‘in situ’ classroom construction. The metaphor of knowledge and experience as objects which are owned or can be caught like diseases from strata of society, to one’s advantage or disadvantage, is prevalent. Also prevalent is the idea that some persons do not possess their proper entitlement to knowledge by being debarred, for various reasons, from aspects of the curriculum. This is viewed as worrying because the knowledge curriculum is looked upon as being hierarchically structured; some pieces of knowledge are more worthy than others.

The pupils too are reified, as being within certain class boundaries, gender boundaries, etc. This overlooks the numerous self-and other- constructions which abound in the micro-societal world of the classroom.

The teacher too tends to have one persona, as the distributor of knowledge, which is viewed somewhat like slices of a cake that he/she is distributing, often unfairly. Over the years the ‘cake’ has been acquired in differing fashions - e.g. the pupils have been required to find it themselves and conceptualize what it was (Piaget) or it has been administered crumb by crumb in accordance with the pupils’ readiness for it (Vygotsky) or, prior to any interest in individual differential psychology, the cake has just been handed over, not tailor-made for any receiver (forgive the change in metaphor).
Traditional Model of Experience

The motivation of the teacher is also reified and so lessons can have aims and objectives, e.g. to teach 'friction'. Knowledge is viewed as something which can be placed in sets and subsets away from its construction. This setting is not always subject-based. Sometimes theme-based, or other, curricula become fashionable.

This metaphor is so commonsensical that our whole educational system adheres to it. I shall argue, in this thesis, that discourse structures adequately cater for knowledge construction without the formation of this metaphor, with which we are all familiar.

In all probability many educational researchers would smile upon the same kind of classroom environment that I myself would smile upon—a discursive one—but, co-opting into this metaphor, their proposed changes would be under the auspices of this metaphor and its often confrontational dichotomies. Their arguments rest upon notions of the passivity/activity of pupils and notions of disempowerment/empowerment. Here are just some examples:-

Hammersley and Hargreaves (1983) devote a section of their edited book to the differential effects of school subjects on boys and girls (pp. 151 to 191). Hargreaves (1994: 7) writes:-

"The contents and categories of curriculum are a powerful device of social selection and social control: in terms of gender and race, certainly, and in terms of social class as well."

As we have discussed, there are many person constructions in the classroom and gender, race or class might, or, more probably, might not, be one of these.

Many books and articles, in the wake of the National Curriculum, dwell on choice and curriculum entitlement (e.g. Lawrence [ed.], 1994, in the sphere of vocational, further and higher education). Knowledge is robbed of its constructed nature and afforded a reified pre-existence. Cashdan's (1993) very title 'Teaching, learning and the ownership of knowledge' conforms to this conception of knowledge. Woods (1995: 25) too, modelling his approach on Vygotsky talks of the aim of partnerships between teacher, child and parent as being:-

"... ownership of knowledge ... and autonomy."

Following on from what I said previously about teacher-motive reifications, researchers often devote much space to implementation and evaluation of curricula through aims and objectives (see Wragg, 1993 and 1994). The teacher is then very much the knower, the instigator, with all the notions of power that that implies.
A Discursive Approach

We have seen how educational theorists play around with the notions of the activity and/or passivity of learners. Let us now review how Discursive Psychology would view the personal and objective dimensions in talk. As we saw in the Introduction, the personal and objective orientations of discourse can be conceptually connected. They can boil down to the same thing. They can also be empirically connected. In their promotion of knowledge claims, people use the two orientations discursively as bases for each other, while also using the contrast between, on the one hand, the realm of the subjective, the individual, the personal and, on the other, the objective, the world outthere.

Some discourse analysts, as we shall see later, consider language and discourses to be repressive (see pp. 58 to 61 in Widdicombe and Wooffitt, 1995, for a discussion of this). This again separates the personal and the objective. These discourse analysts are influenced by French social theorists and poststructuralist philosophers such as Foucault (1977a, 1977b, 1980) and Derrida (1978, 1981). I hope to show that this position (see also Fairclough, 1989) plays down the interactive qualities of language-in-action and the dynamicism of the Discourse Action Model (DAM) developed by Edwards and Potter (1992a) - see Chapter 6 for an explanation of this model.

My own contention in this thesis will be that the same general discursive features of language, e.g. justifications, blamings, warrants, mitigations, are common across contexts, classes and cultures. This means that I could not endorse the views of Bernstein, for instance.

Conversation analysts have often been accused of paying attention to form rather than to content but I hope to show that when one comes to analyse speech by a conversation-analytic method, the form/content dichotomy breaks down. I hope to show that:-

“Like other fundamental social activities, like food-gathering and socialization of new members, understanding is likely to be accomplished through socially organized means.”

(Silverman, 1985, p. 118)

Silverman is here paraphrasing the words of Moerman and Sacks (1988). Harvey Sacks was the main initiator of conversation analysis which is central to the ideas in this thesis (see Chapter 2 of this thesis). Not only is understanding accomplished thus, by socially organized means, but other educational concerns; knowledge, experience, learning,
consensus and the like. This potential for accomplishment is inferentially inherent in the discourse itself (a cultural resource), not in individuals themselves nor in certain classes of individual.

Language users employ the notions of activity and passivity in talk, rather than treating them solely as topics. Educational researchers tend to do the latter. This is encouraged by the disciplines of Psychology, Sociology and Philosophy.

**Conclusion**

I hope I have made it clear in this chapter that the academic positions on experience, knowledge and mind replicate lay assumptions on these matters which proliferate in our society and the latter probably gave birth to the former (see Garfinkel, 1967 and Heritage, 1984). Since the inception of the disciplines of Psychology and Sociology into the educational system, lay opinions have fed into psychological and sociological research and vice versa. If we study discourse, however, we discover that these are not the full armoury of discursive resources. By becoming participants ourselves, we are only gaining a partial picture. I hope that by the end of this thesis another model of experience will emerge, one based upon participants' practical, 'in loco' concerns, rather than the concerns of academic researchers or people standing outside of the educational arena.

Doing reflexivity, I would add that my potted history of the way experience is viewed has been brief, selective and rhetorical, not without its own political ends. Ironically, I have used realism throughout this chapter to further my relativist claims. I am arguing that this is precisely what humans do to organize their world and I am no exception.

Chapter 2 will take a closer look at the analytic principles underlying this thesis.
CHAPTER TWO
MUSINGS ON METHOD

“All I can give you is a method; I cannot teach you any new truths.”
This alleged statement of Wittgenstein (Ambrose, 1967, p. 344) warns of taking seriously the notion that we can separate a chapter off like this and call it ‘Method’ with the underlying inference that method is separate from our data contents and our analytic conclusions. However, we do this all the time with our chapter titles; we create rhetorically useful entities which can only be penetrated if we so desire.

In using this quotation I would not like to lay myself open to allegations of empiricism. My research mode is not ‘just’ a method with the implication that underlying strata are left unrevealed. Wittgenstein could have added to his assertion that he could relay no new truths ‘because there aren’t any’ but, in our realist world, denial of realities or truths sounds realist in itself. There is also the assumption that, however many truths the author is unpicking or unravelling, his/her work is put forward as authoritative and the truth, divorced from social action. This implies arrogance and deception on the part of relativist researchers, so, as I began this little introduction with Wittgenstein, let me end it (before I set out the format of this chapter) with another quotation, this time from Potter (1996c):-

“At the end of the book the ideal reader should be able to turn their gaze back on the book itself and decompose the techniques and tropes that it draws on so freely. For, I have opted to use a conventional mode of presentation.” (p. 9)

I too use a conventional approach, except at the end of the ‘some principles of analysis’ subsection, as you shall discover.

**Formatting This Chapter**
In this chapter authors usually affix themselves within a certain discipline, map out the contours and parameters of their methods, having, in a prior chapter, aligned themselves with certain eminent pieces of research (a literature search). This procedure fulfils social functions, e.g. it proclaims the current piece of research as legitimate, relevant and useful to the build-up of ‘common knowledge’ (see Chapter 3) within that area. However, there is a tension here in the midst of the construction of all this segmentalized ‘we-ness’. Theses and research contributions are meant to be individual, unique and controversial. Researchers, therefore, often feel an obligation to dismiss and
Method
decry other writers to show that they are part of an ongoing series of debate, a struggle
to attain ‘the real truth’; also an obligation to show that the conclusions expressed in
the work are not obvious, by displaying that there are others whose thinking is at
variance to their tack. Live debate is the issue. Past contributions have little creditation
(see Billig, 1987); their authors would not have their finger on the pulse of modern-day
contingencies and interaction. Their work is useless unless reformulated. (I have
recently watched a production of Verdi’s ‘Nabucco’ updated to include semiotic
messages about the Holocaust and Bosnia.) Even as I write this a counter-argument
niggles at the end of my pen (again see Billig, 1987). Dearie me, is it ever thus? The
counter-argument is this; that great emphasis is often afforded to primary sources over
secondary sources in the pursuit of research (and to original productions of operas,
come to that). Words such as a ‘classic’, a ‘masterpiece’ come to mind; appellations
which freeze a work as universally, over time and space, sending out a message.

To originate research, some writers manage to find a niche between approaches,
inviolated by others, but which can draw on these approaches for creditation. Wooffitt
(1992), in his research into the paranormal, separates conversation and discourse
analysis and positions his research as utilizing both approaches, but as giving
preference to conversation analysis, which, he purports, had previously eschewed
monologic interview talk. Notice his adopted method is ‘resonant of conversation
analytic research’ and thus original.

“...In the subsequent chapters of this book I will pursue many of the empirical
themes that have been raised through discussion of the relative utility of
conversation and discourse analysis .... Notwithstanding the contribution made
by discourse analysis, the examination of these dimensions of language use are,
I believe, better served by the adoption of an empirical approach more resonant
of conversation analytic research.” (pp. 70 and 71)
The message comes over - this is original and so credit-worthy as a piece of research.

Not utilizing a ‘pure’ approach can also protect a researcher from attacks by
writers, such as Watson (1994), who systematically purify areas by showing
misalignment between definitions and individual contributions, e.g. Watson (1994)
defines ethnomethodology as ‘non-ironic’, quoting Garfinkel (1967, viii) as warrant,
and, by so doing, he claims to oust Pollner (1975) and Woolgar (1983) from the
ethnomethodological arena. This ethnoco-cleansing of academic arenas helps to discredit
pieces of work which perhaps otherwise would be difficult to fault.
Method

Wilkinson and Kitzinger (eds. 1995), like Wooffitt (1992), find themselves and their co-writers a niche where no-one has passed before.

"This book brings together, for the first time, a selection of original chapters by feminist psychologists exploring the contributions and contradictions of discourse analysis." (p. 2)

This makes the book original, not just a re-hash of old ideas; fulfilling a need, etc. If attacked by one neighbour, it can jump into the other adjacent camp. However, the appeal is primarily to feminist psychologists, who are going to be the prime readers, not discourse analysts. The impression given is one of plundering discourse analysis - taking of it what is useful for their purposes and discarding the rest (see Widdicombe's quotation, 1995, later in this chapter, on current research in the field of women's studies.)

This discussion on how researchers set about and present their research might seem like a side-issue, an indulgence any thesis writer might engage in. However, in this thesis, it can be seen as appropriate to my topic, i.e. bases for knowledge claims.

I suppose, after all that, the reader expects me to say that I am not going to engage in all that; that I am above it. If so, the reader will be disappointed. My format will not be very different from the usual one, although I do hope that the method and associated literature percolate through other chapters and are not confined to this one.

I find it difficult to slot my research into pre-existing social science categories. After all, in the data, the participants skip about in their referencing of mind constructions, societal constructions, world constructions and the like. Their talk displays no deference to the disciplines of Psychology, Sociology, Philosophy, etc., nor even to cross-disciplinary hybrids like Social Psychology. Even though these disciplines have arisen from 'common-sense' assumptions in everyday talk, matters which social scientists would deem extraneous to their concerns arise. Perhaps we should ask ourselves how separate all these concerns are. Having said that, much of this thesis does cover issues (e.g. the 'possession' of knowledge) which traditionally have been addressed by psychologists, so my approach is loosely one of 'Discursive Psychology' (see Edwards and Potter, 1992a).

The rest of this chapter will be set forth in three sections. As a token of observance to my foregoing deliberations, I shall begin by setting forth various principles of analysis which seem to me to be important in ethnometbodological research, rather than by immediately positioning myself between approaches.
Method

I shall secondly take the reader on a brief tour of some discourse/conversation analytic/constructionist research, in a realist presentation. However, this tour will only be brief as, in Chapters 3 and 6, I parallel my own research with the research of others and, in Chapters 4, 5, 7 and 8, I continually introduce related research in this vein.

Thirdly, I shall be forced to position myself and, in much the same way as Wooffitt (1992), I will position myself at the conversation-analysis end of the discourse/conversation analysis continuum. To justify my lack of progression to the other end of the continuum and to highlight important features in my research, I shall take a critical look at repertoire research within discourse analysis, extrapolating the implications which this way of approaching data holds for connotations of structure and, the central focus of this thesis, experience.

Some Principles of Analysis

Context and Other Social Structures

This thesis will not only be concerned with classroom discourse. Its concern will be with a range of contexts where knowledge construction is being carried out. My contention will be that this range could be even broader. The knowledge-construction nature of the talk is constituted in the talk, not the surroundings. All teachers would agree with me that pedagogic discourse does not naturally occur in schools. Teachers have to struggle to produce it. Also there are numerous other contexts where it can occur. Like Garfinkel (1967 and 1972) discovered in his courtrooms, I want to show that the same lay procedures of interpretation and understanding are pervasive throughout contexts. Context in that sense becomes relevant only when it is a participant’s concern. Linguistic context is quite another matter. The position of an utterance within the sequential organization of speech is a crucial concern of conversation analysts.

Of course, there are certain accountabilities on the part of school staff and pupils which perhaps will be made relevant in the talk and perhaps could be viewed as being specific to schools. Certainly the following construction of accountability would not often be a resource in the usual everyday classroom goings-on in schools - the accountability to provide action for an audience. Perhaps in schools it would be constructed as overriding the search for truth, a kind of playacting even. This attention to accountability comes from the Clive Anderson show. Jim’s goldfish has been constructed as not displaying, through action, the capacity for memory.
Of course, accountabilities need not be so spelt out as this. However, they are interactional resources, not action-determinants. Here Clive is using accountability to carry out a social action, be it to ironize the procedure, to blame, to entertain, or whatever. He often attends to his accountability to entertain, just as children often attend to their accountability to make arguments or create counter-positions, etc. (see Chapter 3). However, attention to accountabilities has to be evidenced before it can come into analytic play. In this extract it can be evidenced on lines 364, 365 and 366, the irony and its uptake, signalling the oriented-to norm of producing good television.

Here is another excerpt from the Clive Anderson data which attends to his accountability to generate lengthy discussions. These lengthy discussions would often contain much causal reasoning. This occurs after his introduction of Jessica, a zoologist, and when he is asking her the first question:-

Extract Method.2 (Source AS/CA beg)
Method

25  <Why are there no green mammals?>
26  Jessica  It is a good one isn't it.
27  There are is the answer.
28  [ ((she laughs ))
29  Clive:  [ Ah
30  Jessica:  I'm afraid ((sounds in parenthesis ))
31  [ there are green mammals.
32  Clive:  [ Ah well
33  that's not a >very< good question after all

In schools questions would probably not be thus evaluated. It is answers which are evaluated, not questions. (Answers here, of course, are coming from a constructed expert). However, for Clive as constructed television presenter, questions which do not provide much television mileage are often constructed as not good questions.

Another possible basis for the question's not being a good one, and perhaps one that is more visible in the data, is that its presupposition was wrong, or rejected. Lines 30 and 31 are important in this interpretation. Clive is accountable for asking well-formed and considered questions. The contrast with school is that it is the teacher-questioner who is the expert there and you do not expect children to correct teachers' presuppositions, not without being classed as cheeky.

In this matter of context, as in every other aspect of the analysis, the participants must speak for themselves and much research in these times has been moving away from materialistic settings to the involved interactants themselves. Vygotsky (1978) stressed that context was 'intermental'. Erickson and Shultz (1981) consider that definitions of context must be mutually shared and ratified (p. 148) and Edwards and Mercer (1989) suggest context should be 'intersubjective for the participants' (p. 92). However, perhaps it is a step further to consider the talk itself as creating the context, including the intersubjectivity, rather than viewing intermental and intersubjective perspectives as somehow 'real', measurable, and perhaps humanistic. For example, in the chapter on the Organization of Narrative Fact, Chapter 6, I show how intersubjectivity can be constructed by the use of voicings and also by consensus.

Just as I am not eager to demarcate my data as classroom, school or educational data and prefer to concentrate on knowledge-construction settings (attributorial, I would hope, rather than actual, i.e. what counts as knowledge for participants), I also
deem too great an emphasis on ethnographic details of personae can gravely detract from showing us what the talk is doing. To segmentalize the world into social structures pre-existent to our data endangers our analysis (see Boden and Zimmerman, 1991; also Drew and Heritage, eds., 1992). For this reason I do not want to engage in what is so common in educational research, a developmental argument, so no acknowledgement or concession will be made to maturity/immaturity, at least not as a serious analytic factor, unless relevanced by the participants. Social categories, such as ‘pupil’, ‘teacher’, ‘television interviewer’, ‘son’, etc. are employed discursively by people. Sacks (lectures collated 1992) recognized them as items within Membership Categorization Devices, such as ‘family’, ‘race’, ‘gender’, etc., which collect together and join various of these items, e.g. mother and son. They are cultural resources available for mobilization in arguments and discussions. It is often difficult for discourse/conversation analysts to deconstruct or deny the ontological reality of these categories and the epistemological reality of prior accounts. The latter is difficult in the wake of Aristotle’s assertion that both forms of dialectical reasoning, inductive and syllogistic, utilize old knowledge to impart new. It is so easy to equate ‘old knowledge’ with ‘cultural resources’, especially in a world where we concentrate on individual possessions, including psychological ones.

Perhaps it is better to equate ‘cultural resources’ with ‘interpretative procedures’. Goffman’s (1981) contextual ‘framing’ and social cognitive theorists Schank and Abelson’s (1977) contextual ‘scripts’ can rather be regarded as discursive deployments than as having any sociological and psychological realities beyond that (see Edwards, 1994b and 1995a for discussions of script formulations). Wowk (1984) shows how social categories can be utilized to blacken the character of a murder victim in order to minimalize the guilt of the accused and reduce the sentence meted out.

So, in my analyses, social classifications and social context will be regarded as participants’ categories, not issues whose importance is pre-empted prior to, or with the total omission of; participants’ orientations.

Knowledge, Experience and Power

As a researcher into identity, Widdicombe (1995) complains that, in women’s studies, “...as poststructuralist discourse analysis becomes more trendy, the ethnomethodological variety, which focuses not on political features of identity but on the details of talk in interaction, has come to be regarded as
unfashionable and naive. There is a corresponding neglect of the mundane and everyday; for example the ways in which identities are constructed, negotiated and made relevant in talk, and the ways in which people construct their meaning and significance.” (p. 106)

For the purposes of my thesis, we could replace ‘identity’ and ‘identities’ by ‘knowledge and experience’ and complain, not about feminist literature, but about the current educational research, presently in vogue, with its strong political overtones concerning knowledge and experience. Indeed, throughout this century there have been strong political fabrics of opinion permeating educational research. I discussed some of these political overtones in Chapter 1. For present purposes, my contention is that the analyst should step back while the participants, with their concerns, take centre-stage. (In this thesis knowledge will be regarded as a social construct, not something philosophically or psychologically ‘real’).

Of course, this hand-over is not entirely possible. The thesis will send out rhetorical messages through its language structures, even if not overt political opinions. Schegloff, in the Introduction to Sacks’ lectures (1992, Vol. 1) writes:-

“Deployment of the pronouns ‘we’, ‘you’ ‘they’ and the like can serve to express varying sorts of solidarity and differentiation, and different ways of ‘partitioning the population’ (as he [Sacks] used to put it). This was a matter to which Sacks was sensitive, having written a paper in graduate school only a few years earlier on Durkheim’s use of ‘we’ in The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life, an echo of which appears in lecture 33 of the Spring 1966 lectures.” (p. xi)

Pronouns, as they are used in experiential claims in the construction of knowledge, are the topic of Chapters 4 and 5 of this thesis.

**Talk in General and Mundane Talk**

With the legacy from Descartes, the social sciences often create a division between what is studied and the method by which it is studied. As already pointed out earlier in this chapter, I am pampering to that dichotomy by entitling this section ‘Musings on Method’. Traditionally, language is viewed either as a topic in itself or as a tool to arrive at a certain truth. In conversation analysis this distinction breaks down. Analyst and participant alike use the same inferential skills to analyze what is occurring in the talk and the talk constitutes the context reflexively as it progresses. There is nothing
analytically available beyond the talk. The analyst/participant dichotomy disintegrates and it is rather appropriate that, in much of my data, I am actually partaking in the discourse. Data collection and transcribing, also, are themselves part of that selfsame analysis. From such a perspective on language, accusations levelled against ethnomethodological discourse/conversation analysts, that the talk in their analyses has a sole prioritized objective status in the midst of a sea of relative relationships, look mildly ridiculous. The talk is not an extraneous, bottom-line reality, although admittedly many researchers misguided interest themselves in discourse analysis expecting to be able to use it as such a tool. Many ‘etic’ approaches justify their existence in the academic world through aspects of the talk ‘making manifest’ their essential features, be it from disciples of the phenomenological humanist existential psychology of Rogers (e.g. 1961), the severe structuralism of Althusser (e.g. 1976) or the epistemological absolutism of Durkheim (e.g. 1964) or whatever. The talk proves all. There are hidden causal processes at work, they would have us believe, be they psychological, sociological, philosophical, physiological, and so on, which produce the talk. They cannot accept the talk as a starting point. In the psychological domain, Edwards and Potter (1992a) regard behaviourism as such an approach and have this to say in an attempt to ward off criticisms that discursive psychology is itself behaviourist:-

"Behaviourism is pre-eminently an ‘etic’ approach: it attempts to replace participants’ ordinary language of psychology and social interaction with purportedly more objective and scientific language which captures the underlying causal processes which shape behaviour. In contrast to this, discursive psychology is an ‘emic’ approach: it starts from participants’ own concepts and understandings as these are deployed in practices of interaction ..... Crucially, then, it is an approach to action, not behaviour."

(p. 100; original emphases)

This could be a criticism of traditional sociology, which often regards language as pre-existent and deterministic, a cultural tool to mould the masses. According to such an approach, we have only to study language to discover what sort of society we live in. In the psychological domain, it could be a criticism of researchers who look at the talk to explain individual psyches. In social psychology, it could be a criticism of how talk is viewed as a reflection of how the individual locates him/herself within society.
Let us now leave language and talk in general and discuss mundane conversation, which is the topic of conversation analysis. As we shall see when we briefly review the history of discourse/conversation analysis, Sacks was the main proponent of conversation analysis, which uses ethnomethodological means of analysing interaction (see Wooffitt, 1990, on the analysis of interaction). Sacks laid great store on ‘ordinary’ conversation, naturally occurring and away from formal settings, and stressed its value but always with the implication that there were other areas of talk which were not ordinary and were not conversation. This has meant that researchers, who have used a conversation analytic approach to, say, interview data (e.g. Wooffitt, 1992), have been forced into providing strong justification for their method.

Let us, instead, view all talk as ordinary. After all Garfinkel, who in the 1950s coined the word ‘ethnomethodology’, wrote:-

“...a person is 95 per cent juror before he comes near the court” (1967, p. 110)

We could say the same of a scientist in relation to the laboratory; a teacher in relation to the classroom; a doctor in relation to the surgery; a newscaster in relation to the studio, etc. Common-sense reasoning operates throughout society. Distinctions, such as between fact and opinion, the real and the fictitious, are made by all. McHoul (1982) writes:-

“If (as some insist) an ordinariness pervades the social world, it pervades all discrete discourses - which is to say: all discourses. It does not emerge separately from some (particularly esoteric) examples among those discourses. Briefly: ‘ordinary/esoteric’ is not a division into strict types of discourse and it has no analytic mileage in it.”

(p. 2)

Sacks was in a position where he had to justify strongly his use of ordinary mundane conversation as data - in other words, there was a rhetorical dimension to Sacks’ celebration of the mundane. Macro-sociologists, especially, viewed talk from micro-situations with distrust. Indeed, all qualitative, as opposed to quantitative, approaches to social scientific research, have still, in certain circumstances, to assert and re-assert their validity and reliability. However, even in the realm of qualitative analysis, Sacks was struggling to grant ordinary conversation some status in a world where formal exchanges and idealized interactions were given precedence. His task was to demonstrate the worth and value of everyday speech; to show that common-sense language was as organized as that in institutions, and as orderly as grammar itself. There was also the danger of pre-creating context and categories, if one were to
examine language in institutions, as this was the norm in the social sciences in those
days. However, within the arena of qualitative analyses, we are in a slightly different
academic climate from Sacks, who operated in the 1960s and 1970s. Conversation
analysis has become established and, within that framework, conversation is revered, so
much so that, if your data talk is slightly engineered and infringes such directives, as is
the case in all of my data, it is viewed as not a suitable candidate for conversation
analysis. The result of this is that people like Robin Wooffitt and myself are falling over
themselves with apologies and justifications for the ‘got-up’ nature of their data
samples.

The general nature of talk is something I stress throughout this thesis. We must
view what is endogenously generated within the talk to decide context, manipulation,
etc., not create an exogenous context of interpretation before we begin. We need not
go to great lengths to justify our selection of data. The participants will display for us
their understandings (in a non-cognitive sense) of the context, their accountabilities and
thus their sense of manipulatedness. What is important for me is that these interchanges
work as a conversation and participants orientate to them in a meaningful manner.
Today we can afford to study language on a broader scale and discover that lay-speech
and speech in more formalized settings bear much in common. Where is one to draw
the boundary anyhow? For example, are telephone calls ordinary speech or an
institutionalized mode?
Method

Reflexivity

MID-THESIS MADNESS

(Knock, knock)

Ann: Oh, hello, Jack! Thanks for coming. Have you read my thesis so far?
Jack: Yes, I have and you want us now to discuss your current method section, do you?
Ann: I want us to be part of the method section, not just discuss it.
Jack: But what is there to say? You’re a fan of discourse and conversation analysis and you’re going to use these as tools in your research.
Ann: Not as tools, Jack! The same inferential skills could be used on what I’m saying as I’m using on the participants and as they’re using on each other.
Jack: Oh, so I’m brought in to show you engage in discourse too. Shame I’m only a pretend character!
Ann: Why are you constructing these real/pretend dichotomies? This works as a conversation, doesn’t it? It doesn’t matter whether you’re real or not.
Jack: It does now that it’s a participant’s concern. I’m concerned about not being real. Anyhow, you’re extremely concerned about displaying that your data actually happened. Look at the authority with which you produced that Clive Anderson data.
Ann: Well, yes, I am. That’s the warrant, you see that my views are ‘right’. The data have to be real; they have to have been naturally occurring; and they have to have been transcribed precisely. I’m only human!
Jack: In speech I perhaps wouldn’t hear that reservation about the word ‘right’. Anyway, let’s get back to this conversation. It isn’t real.
Ann: No it isn’t, because I don’t want it to be and I don’t want anyone analysing it either. That’s why it’s not presented in those nice little short lines. I could insert a few timed pauses etcetera if I wanted to make reality an issue. Hang on, I’ll repeat that. I could insert a few timed pauses, some elongated vowel sounds and some accelerated speech, if I wanted to make reality an issue.
Method


Ann: I wished to formulate it as a repetition to imply I had retained the meaning but changed the form - to draw attention to the three-part list.

Jack: And show yourself as a discursive being.

Ann: And for some obscure reason you wanted to formulate what I said as a change in meaning and make me seem inconsistent.

Jack: Just as an opportunity for you to say all that, I think. Hang on, though! You’re the creator of this little dialogue. How can you say the reason is obscure to you? So you’re a discursive being. But we knew that, didn’t we? You’re in your own data a lot, discoursing merrily. You’re the teacher, aren’t you? And the mother?

Ann: The creator, eh? I am being given agency by myself and you. Yes, I do discourse in my data, but not as a researcher. You must remember I am multi-personed in this piece of work (although even saying that unites these persons). Researchers are meant to be free from rhetoric, engaging in pure, absolute truth, or at least as far as can be achieved without the insights of fresh discoveries. Readers could imagine that the teacher, the mother, everyone else were partaking in Wittgenstein’s ‘language games’; everyone but me, the researcher, who’s meant to be somehow above it all, looking in. Then the whole thesis would read as something evaluative, something condemnatory to educators, something which split knowledge into pure and sullied segments. Educators could be viewed as diving into the sullied area for their knowledge while pure knowledge remained untouched in virgin condition elsewhere; perhaps even here in this thesis.

Jack: Lovely spatial metaphor! Well, I’ll get on and do my job. You’ve constructed me to make consensual noises which indicate to everyone that yours is an understandable stance. But can’t I argue with you? That would divorce me from your wishes and intentions and make me more plausible as a being in my own right. It would take away your ‘creator’ image.

Ann: Okay, go ahead, argue!
Jack: I don't like my undergraduate status. I could be exploited.
Ann: I never said you were an undergraduate!
Jack: No, but your setting the agenda and my being summoned implied an inferior ranking.
Ann: You have been reading too much traditional sociology. Oh well, I suppose it's a participant's category now you've mentioned it and, as such, should be attended to.
Jack: I also don't like my gender. It seems as if you're compensating to avert claims of a strongly feminist attitude or, if my assumptions as to hierarchy were correct, then you are being very feminist.
Ann: I'm not sure I understand all that. It sounds contradictory. But what's a bit of contradiction among friends? But don't use that verb 'to be', especially emphasized. It makes me shudder. Alright. We'll change your gender, assuming there are only two of them; genders that is. Is that better?
Jill: Overlooking the fact that you too used the verb 'to be'.
Ann: You haven't overlooked it, you're mentioning it!
Jill: As I said, overlooking the fact that you used the verb 'to be', I might say that I now sound like a nursery rhyme character, especially as Jack has preceded me.
Ann: Why say you might say? You are saying!
Jill: Now you're fact-constructing again, using an emphasized 'to be' word.
Ann: Why this pre-occupation with linguistics? If I object to it in one context, that doesn't mean I will object to it in situations where it does good rhetorical work. Back to your identity, is that better?
Joanna: Much better. Come on, tell me other reasons why you created me.
Ann: Oh, back to passivity, eh? Well, I was fed up with ordering my ideas into congealed paragraphs and I was getting worried I was repeating myself too often. If I jump around like a kangaroo and say things several times, the fault can be laid at your door in this interactive setting. Often you are supplying me with one half of an adjacency pair to which it is a normative requirement to fit the other half like a jigsaw.
Method

Joanna: Perhaps I should have been called Norman then.

Ann: Don’t start all that again, please! Getting back to what I was saying; if I repeat myself, it can also be attributed to your mental intellectual deficiency.

Joanna: Come off it! I’m one of the ‘A’ grade undergraduates.

Ann: I thought you had lost your undergraduate status.

Joanna: I had better regain it if I am to be classed as thick. Better to be a thick undergraduate than a thick academic. Oh dear, is that remark politically correct?

Ann: Probably not. I’m glad I made you say it, not me. Anyhow, the blame for how people are viewed can be laid at society’s door and you didn’t equate being an undergraduate with being thick, because earlier you had implied there were brilliant ‘A’ grade students. It just goes to show that even in micro-sociology macro cultural issues have to be attended to all the time. Take, for example, the discourse that Wetherell and Potter collected about race in New Zealand. Macro issues in micro situations.

Joanna: Phew! Let’s get back to your research. You’ve explained how experience is viewed in educational spheres and given us an insight into some of the theories of the major protagonists. You’ve got as far as explaining some of your analytic principles. Is that right?

Ann: How can I agree with a reformulation which took four lines when I have written all those pages!

Joanna: Don’t talk about lines! We’re meant to be engaging in a spoken discussion.

Ann: We won’t fool anyone with no overlaps, hesitations nor pauses.

Joanna: Oh, my goodness! I’ve just realized. We haven’t any references in this chapter as yet.


Joanna: Yes, but they aren’t enough and they’re meant to have dates to show you’re quoting a source, a text, rather than glossing the author’s views.

Ann: Alright, 1953 and 1992. But it’s not necessary in speech. Anyway, I always considered that giving somebody’s ideas a date kind of
Method

implied that he/she (now I’m getting confused with written forms) only held those ideas for a limited span of time.

Joanna: Wittgenstein and Potter and Wetherell aren’t enough! How about my Auntie Elsie?

Ann: What’s your Auntie Elsie got to do with it?

Joanna: She interests herself a lot in language use. She’s always saying, “Are you implying that.... ?” Really meta is my Auntie Elsie.

Ann: Does she have a surname?

Joanna: Yes, Browngrove.

Ann: Has she written her opinions down?

Joanna: No. She hates letter-writing.

Ann: When did she last say this then?

Joanna: Last week when I visited her.

Ann: Okay. We’ll put Browngrove (1997) and hope for the best.

Joanna: A bit like Scrooge’s ghosts my time is running out.

Ann: Don’t you go bringing Scrooge’s ghosts into this! This is meant to be a serious bit of research, not a literary fiction.

Joanna: Okay, but like Scrooge’s ghosts I was only constructed to do a job of work and that job is almost at an end.

Ann: Before you go, tell me about the rest of my thesis.

Joanna: I don’t have to read that! That’s after me in sequence.

Ann: Oh, go on!

Joanna: What! You’re constructing me as having read that! I’ll need overtime pay. Oh, alright. You’re going to say that what people are often looking for in knowledge claims are not correct versions but justifiable stances and positions and that experiential claims can justify positions, if invoked from a reliable source, but often need legitimation themselves, as objects of universal availability, when they are threatened in argumentation. Also, they can sometimes be discounted or denied in the clash of conflicting knowledge claims. You are also saying that the synthesis of the person orientation of experience and the object orientation to warrant knowledge claims is often ignored in traditional theories, wherein these two orientations are viewed as dichotomous, the enhancement of the construction of
one undermining the other. Participants are entitled to do this but theorists should look at both elements, as they often reflexively feed into each other.

Ann: Why do I need all those pages!
Joanna: To justify your opinions. You have to show yourself thinking.
Ann: I don’t have opinions and I don’t think.
Joanna: Don’t say such things! You’re getting churlish.
Ann: I can only do churlishness. I can’t be churlish.
Joanna: Oh dear! Deconstruct me quickly!
Ann: Okay.

(Joanna vanishes)

(A few minutes elapse)

Ann: There! Silence is not discursively neutral I could display thereby that my interchange with Joanna had affected me. Now perhaps I should deconstruct myself, as not only Ann the researcher will appear in the following pages but Ann the teacher, Ann the mother, Ann the data collector, Ann the analyst, Ann the reader of research, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera.

(Ann disappears)

(Anns appear)
A voice: I am the voice of the remnants of your previous method chapter. I am speaking from the rubbish bin.
Anns: But that’s been scrapped. I suppose Ann the researcher’s metamorphosis was a little premature. Let’s change back.

(Anns disappear and Ann the researcher reappears)
Voice: We can exist in the bin and in your thesis.
Ann: Okay.
Voice: Isn’t this all a bit postmodern?
Ann: I suppose so but modernism is so much a part of our culture that nobody would understand what I was getting at if this were full of conventional realism, self-contained selves and the like. That’s why this is presented in such a postmodern fashion with bits of deconstruction of modernism and insights into epistemic constructionism thrown in; also a bit of compensatory irony towards
discourse and conversation analysis. Now there’s a paradoxical expression ‘insights into epistemic constructionism’, as if it were there waiting to be discovered. Back to postmodernism; all this doesn’t mean that a postmodern argument is any more valid than a modern one. I could deconstruct that too. Habermas (1987) views postmodernism as a rhetorical move to show the constructed nature of modernism and I would agree with that. Anyway, why did you emerge out of the bin?

**Voice:** We wanted to protest about a quotation from Edwards (1995b) being thrown away.

**Ann:** A quotation about what?

**Voice:** Opposing the implication that Harvey Sacks thought conversation veered towards consensus.

**Ann:** Argumentation plays a large part in my thesis. There is no need to say that.

**Voice:** Yes, but as argumentation plays such a large part in your thesis, I think you had better re-enforce that here. Why not produce what you had in a conventional style? It’s too good to throw away.

**Ann:** You would say that, wouldn’t you? (as Mandy Rice-Davies said about Lord Astor). You are the remnants we are talking about. There I go discussing your stake. But I am getting bogged down in this means of presentation. There are all sorts of realities I have created and don’t want deconstructed, even myself and my own desires and intentions in this thesis, even your rhetorical stake. I think I will continue with a conventional style and I will fit that quotation of Edwards somewhere in the thesis. Method permeates my thesis anyhow. It doesn’t just occur here in this chapter. I don’t think I’m very good at this deconstruction lark.

**Voice:** Nobody is as long as they’re human.

**Ann:** Okay, let madness, or what counts as it, end and let sanity, or what counts as it, begin.

**Voice:** Sounds Shakespearean or like a pantomime.
Method

Ann: That dichotomy I constructed will give strength to what follows. People will consider the rest of my thesis as sane, normative, common-sensical, against the backdrop of this ‘lapse’.

(Flash of light)
Voice: More and more like a pantomime.
Ann: The pantomime has ended or has it just begun?

Here is a playlet which resembles my data extracts but which, unlike most of them, which tend to strengthen the idea of the existence of a fairly stable physical world, topicalizes the deconstruction of all existential notions of ‘reality’. It dismantles the physical reality of the external world, the self as a rational entity, and this notion of the world seems not to be issuing from a single person but even ‘externalities’ themselves are co-opting into this view of ‘reality’. Nevertheless, Ann the researcher becomes disillusioned with all this - there are still bottom-lines of reality which remain intact and the deconstruction itself makes a postmodern outlook on the world seem real in some way. One of these bottom-lines is that, unlike the data, this playlet sets out to construct my (Ann the researcher’s) authorship. As a reflexive ‘meta’ piece, it is portrayed as being intermingled with my own (Ann the researcher’s) reflections and involvement with my own (Ann the researcher’s) thesis. The data is not so constructed. It is constructed as external evidence; potentially available to all. In this way, I (Ann the researcher) approach my (Ann the researcher’s) thesis in the same way as people approach experiential claims - from personal and objective perspectives.

Note: For this playlet to be reflexive, I have to be equated now with Ann the researcher.

Other bottom-line realities which remain intact are, first of all, a conviction about the nature of language as functional and, secondly, related to that which I have already stated, a constructionist approach which considers ‘reality’ as emanating more from the person than the script, which would be at odds with ‘pure’ ethnomethodological discourse and conversation analysis.

My thesis constructs and deconstructs realities throughout its entirety, just like many other pieces of discourse. To bracket off plays or reflexive paragraphs or even words by inverted commas is a reality-construction game, implying by contrastive configurations that some bits of text are more real than others; more authoritative; less deceitful. Sometimes I stress that my data is derived from naturalistic settings and is
Method

populated by participants (see Billig, 1994; but see Stringer, 1994 to be made aware of how research articles can never lose their depopulatedness); sometimes I point out the paradox in discourse/conversation analytic research, that the avowal that all realities are constructed is juxtaposed by a strict reliance on evidential data. I point out that this brings discourse/conversation analysts to the realization that the arguments of social scientists, themselves included, are also constructed and thereby constitute reality. This realization can be infinitely regressive. Critics of the realistic stances employed by discourse/conversation analysts can be accused of displaying realistic standpoints themselves and so on (realists, of course, find this criticism easy to combat). While engaging in this argument, I point out that it behoves us, as discourse/conversation analysts, to recognize that we are doing as humans do; organizing our world on realistic principles and marshalling our resources to advance our argument. Our language, our mores, have realistic foundations and cultural resources tie us to these forms of expression. Thus, reflexivity has become a vital part of the discourse/conversation analyst’s armour (see Potter, 1982; Potter, 1988; Ashmore, 1989; Potter, 1992 and Ashmore et al, 1994).

Is this the best I can do, then, to ‘be reflexive’ - a realistic viewpoint about other realistic viewpoints? Is this the bottom-line, an absolute statement, removed from any persuasive context and any social practice? I think not, and it is not even constructed as being so. Relativists could be accused of portraying reflexive comments as ‘the truth’. This could be deemed to be at odds with their assertion that all statements are contextually produced and this indeed would be a fair criticism (from a realist perspective). However, my story is not constructed as ‘the truth’, but as an argument; an argument sensitive to context and, in its production, it constructs other arguments as such too.

Throughout the thesis I attempt to highlight the produced nature of reflexivity. I stress I am ‘doing reflexivity’; even this stress on my ‘doing reflexivity’ has itself rhetorical purposes and so on, ad infinitum, and yet not. Showing how reflexivity is done is a considerable warrant for a relativist argument. Indeed it is when relativists are being absolutist (as indeed they must needs be in argumentative situations in a realist world) that they are on shakier ground. Displaying ironically how reflexive statements are bracketed off by conspicuous playlets; bracketed off in reflexive paragraphs, full of meta-considerations about reflexivity; helps to put across my general message of relativity.
Method

Reflexivity is not, then, a problem in a relativist piece of work. It stands coherently with the rest of the argument. Ashmore (1989) writes in connection with his Chapter 3:-

"... the reflexive self-reference that the tu quoque correctly points to can be celebrated rather than avoided. In the pursuit of this ideal, the chapter (and the thesis as a whole) attempts to show the positive benefits of self-reference both by defusing its supposed traps - the infinite regress of metadiscourse, the impossibility of being both a participant and an analyst at once, the inevitable self-destructiveness of a self-referential approach - and by adopting an attitude of serious nonseriousness towards the writing's own paradoxical nature." (p. 27)

So, my conclusion is that I can 'do reflexivity' in this thesis just as avidly as I can engage in stories, causal constructions, motivational constructions, etc. Like the rest of humankind, I strive to be convincing. Reflexivity should not be omitted from theses such as this. It abets our cause and is a considerable asset. Whether I am doing reflexivity or doing reflexivity about reflexivity or doing reflexivity about doing reflexivity about reflexivity, I am not looking for single truths or bottom lines. I am looking for arguments (and that is not a bottom-line truth either, and no more is this!) The playlet aids my cause, just as my data do, even if, in a world of single truths, if put together, the two can be made to seem at variance and contradictory. Realism and relativism can also co-exist to bolster claims, just as can the person and object orientations in experiential claims (see especially Chapters 7 and 8; also the section in this present chapter on Ethnomethodological Discourse Analysis). The playlet takes us away from the conception of the world as we know it; gives the author a discursive personality which is unusual in academic texts; and offers an alternative text presentation. This playlet shouts of an alternative world of multiple realities; not as a truth but as an argument.

Conversation Analysis and Related Approaches

"Conversation analysis studies the order/ organization/ orderliness of social action, particularly those social actions that are located in everyday interaction, in discursive practices, in the sayings/ tellings/ doings of members of society."

(Psathas, 1995, p. 2)

Although I do not adhere rigidly to its principles, conversation analysis has been the main inspiration behind the writing of this thesis.
As has been previously mentioned, conversation analysis was primarily developed by Harvey Sacks who, together with Emanuel Schegloff and Gail Jefferson, developed it in the United States of America in the 1960s and 1970s. Psathas (1995) concisely summarizes the early developments in conversation analysis on that side of the Atlantic. Many of the early proponents were sociologists and much of the early work reflects this leaning. This corpus of work had its origins in ethnomethodology and Psathas’ preferred term for this kind of study would be ‘ethnomethodological interaction analysis’ (p. 2), rather than ‘conversation analysis’, as many pieces of work profess to be conversation analysis which do not have their origins in ethnomethodology. This is even more so the case in discourse analysis, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Garfinkel (1967), the originator of ethnomethodology, proclaimed that people had normative expectations of their interactions with others and, if these were breached, social intercourse addressed the breach, such as by fixing it or pathologizing the actor, etc. It is in those addressings that the breach and its normative backdrop, and the also normative armoury of repair procedures, become especially visible and available to ethnomethodological analysis. Everyday social interaction is remarkably robust, precisely because of how possible breaches are dealt with. This becomes the basis of ‘repair’ in conversation analysis (see Nofsinger, 1991, for an overview of ‘repair’).

The main feature of ethnomethodology is an acknowledgement of a) indexicality (i.e. all social actions are contextually situated and sensitive), b) reflexivity (i.e. social actions themselves sequentially become an integral part of the realities they create) and c) the documentary method, which Garfinkel (1967) described as follows:-

“The method consists of treating an actual appearance as ‘the document of’, as ‘pointing to’, as ‘standing on behalf of’ a presupposed underlying pattern. Not only is the underlying pattern derived from its individual documentary evidences, but the individual documentary evidences, in their turn, are interpreted on the basis of ‘what is known’ about the underlying pattern. Each is used to elaborate the other.”

Garfinkel’s famous experiment of the fake therapist (p. 79), who gave random ‘yes/no’ answers to students’ questions, and Garfinkel’s study of the students’ reactions to these answers, which were taken by the students to be genuine replies, is probably the best illustration of the documentary method at work.
Much of the early work in conversation analysis showed how speech is organized according to tacit, general rules. It is inferentially understood by participants who are themselves analysts. Any misalignment of inferences can be exposed in the sequence of turn-taking and be repaired. As we have seen in our principles-of-analysis section, speech is action. It is not a reflection of any pre-existing ‘realities’. Speech is looked at in naturalistic settings and on a micro-sociological scale. Conversation analysts assert that this kind of analysis is more informative about how participants relate to organizations and institutions rather than, say, a structural analysis. The latter would divorce organizations and institutions from the human element within them and afford to them a reality outside of the local constructed reality, orientated to at that point in time by the speech participants. Such a view as the latter begins with an assumption that people are passive role players, or what Garfinkel called ‘cultural dopes’.

Sacks’ early work was centred around calls to a Suicide Prevention Centre (1972). He and the other early conversation analysts studied turn-taking, repair, adjacency pairs, preference, assessments, pre-sequences, formulations, continuers, closings and pre-closings of telephone calls, etc. (For an articulate overview of some of these features, see Nofsinger, 1991)

Although one cannot, with any degree of validity, separate the organization of speech from the social actions performed within it, because, of course, these go hand in hand, some researchers moved the emphasis away from this identifying of the normative expectations which structured conversation to showing how specific actions were accomplished inside of those tightly organized structures, e.g. Pomerantz (1978b) has portrayed how blamings are accomplished; Sacks (1984) has given us an insight how people ‘do being ordinary’ in situations where their adherence to normative standards is threatened; Buttny has produced work on accountability (e.g. 1993); and Antaki has concentrated on explanations (e.g. 1988, ed.; with Leudar, 1992; 1994).

Some authors have moved the principles of conversation analysis back into specific settings. Thus context becomes important as well as language structure and social action. As I hope I have shown, one has to be wary here and not give context an ‘a priori’ reality. Wowk (1984) displayed how categorization work played a major part in the defence argument in a murder trial; Clayman (1992) has shown how neutrality is achieved by footing (voicing others) in interviews held during the news; Widdicombe and Wooffitt’s (1995) work on identity is specific to youth sub-cultural identity construction; and Wooffitt (1992) looks at the paranormal, rather than taking a more
all-encompassing view of fact construction. In effect, Sue Widdicombe and Robin Woffitt are good examples of how researchers, while working within potential 'a priori' structures (e.g. group membership and identity), can still adhere to conversation analysis, as envisaged by Harvey Sacks. For example, these authors are at pains to show how contextual categories, identities, etc. are worked up by participants. Punk identity is formulated and made relevant by participants, not identified independently by the analysts. Also, in Robin Woffitt's work regarding the paranormal, the interviewee constructs his/her own identity and the context of the paranormal sightings, etc. through the organization of fact (see Chapter 6 of my own thesis). In the interviews the participants' orientations to the interviewer are always publicly on display. To my mind, this makes the work of these researchers exciting and stimulating.

Over the three decades since Sacks' early work in conversation analysis, its advocates have become more globally situated and it has become more cross-disciplinary than it was originally, with its strong sociological pedigree. Some psychologists, social psychologists especially, have deviated from popular cognitive approaches and adopted a CA perspective. Some major areas of psychology and social psychology have been reworked from this angle, e.g. memory (Edwards and Middleton, 1986a, 1986b, 1987, 1988; Edwards and Potter, 1992b; Edwards, Potter and Middleton, 1992); ideology, prejudice and attitudes (Billig, 1978, 1985, 1988a, 1988b, 1988c, 1989, 1991, 1992, 1995; Potter and Wetherell, 1988; Wetherell and Potter, 1992); identity (Widdicombe and Woffitt, 1989, 1990, 1995; Widdicombe, 1993; Halkowski, 1990; Wetherell and Potter, 1989); attribution (Potter and Edwards, 1990; Edwards and Potter, 1992a, 1993); therapy (Ferrara, 1992; Edwards, 1994b, 1995a); script formulations (Edwards, 1994b, 1995a); and education and classroom talk (Mehan, 1979, 1985; Griffin and Mehan, 1981; Edwards, 1990a, 1990b, 1993). This is certainly not an exhaustive list and some authors, indeed, although constructionist and often citing Harvey Sacks as their inspiration, are quite a way removed from pure ethnomethodology.

Another important aspect of my own research is relativism, which conversation analysis, with its empirical emphasis, does little to address. Relativism has associations with discourse analysis, rather than conversation analysis, and is a feature of SSK (the Sociology of Scientific Knowledge). In this thesis I attempt to unite ethnomethodology and conversation analysis, on the one hand, with discourse analysis, SSK and relativism, on the other. It must be confessed that some researchers in the relativist
sphere are more successful than others at dismantling the garb of realism behind the traditional approaches to these themes, and also have varying capabilities at not merely deconstructing conventional viewpoints but also gaining a positive insight into constructed realities. (The danger, of course, is replacing one traditional model with another).

Not only has this discursive approach bridged sociology and psychology, but economics (e.g. McCloskey, 1986) and even mathematics (e.g. Potter, Wetherell and Chitty, 1991) have been reconstructed as social practices, to name but two more disciplines, and the framework of linguistics has been challenged (e.g. Levinson, 1983; Potter et al, 1990). Linguistic terms such as ‘metaphor’ have been afforded new meaning in this rhetorical context (e.g. Chilton and Ilyin, 1993; Soyland, 1994). Austin (1962), although not himself a conversation analyst nor an ethnomethodologist, indeed instead a post-war Oxford philosopher, had done much, with his speech-act theory, to inseminate the idea of the action orientation of language. This viewpoint stressed that language achieved things; rather than being an abstract system which had evolved primarily to describe things.

This brief review of the literature has dealt with only a small fraction of the research which has been inspired by conversation analysis. A review of the early work can be accessed in Schenkein (1978) but the corpus of articles and books produced over the 1980s and 1990s is far too extensive to be conglomerated. My meagre review can only hope to provide some indication of the areas conversation analysis has infiltrated.

I hope to scrutinize, throughout my thesis, some of the important consequences of adopting a conversation analytical approach. In later chapters I shall address this by referring the reader to actual examples, both my own and some of other researchers, of how such an analysis is achieved (or, at least, my version of it all). Potter and Wetherell (1987) appropriately floundered when trying to advise how to accomplish discourse analysis (pp. 160 to 176). One can list principles of analysis, as I have done earlier in this chapter, but one has to see it in action, see the process, to approach an understanding of it.
**Discourse Analysis**

*Confusion over the term*

This term covers a multitude of approaches having an eclectic array of forebears - sociolinguistics, semiology, structuralism, literary theory, speech-act theory, to name but a few. There are discourse analysts who display conversational coherence by an adherence to speech-act theory and who regard turn sequences as mechanistic (e.g. Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975; Coulthard, 1977; Coulthard and Montgomery, 1981; Labov and Fanshel, 1977). Such researchers are, in the main, linguists. There are also researchers who adopt a cognitively reductionist idea of coherence, doing 'discourse processes' work on story grammars, etc., e.g. many of the articles in Van Dijk (ed. 1985a, 1985b, 1985c, 1985d). Sociolinguists too study discourse but they do so in a given framework of social structures. Much gender work is in this vein. The social context and social categories are often regarded as pre-given, without any investigation of how speech participants construct and relevance them in their talk.

As well as the above, the disciples of Foucault often show little interest in linguistic performance. Foucault himself saw discourses as historically evolved, as constructing objects and subjects, as providing structures for the operation of institutions and as providing the common sense of a culture. There is a danger stemming from too great an emphasis on the historical dimension of discourses, as Wetherell and Potter (1992) point out (p. 90):

> "The study of discourses can .... become something very like the geology of plate tectonics - a patchwork of plates/discourses are understood to be grinding violently together, causing earthquakes and volcanoes, or sometimes sliding silently one underneath the other. Discourses become seen as potent causal agents in their own right, with the processes of interest being the work of one (abstract) discourse on another (abstract) discourse, or the propositions or 'statements' of that discourse working smoothly and automatically to produce objects and subjects."

Foucault and other post-structuralists, such as Barthes (1964, 1972, 1973 and 1974) and Derrida (1978, 1981), preserve the stress on underlying structures inherited from semiology. Their influence has been great in literary studies.
Method

**Ethnomethodological discourse analysis**

As a result of all this confusion about discourses, some studies have replaced the term ‘discourses’ with ‘interpretative repertoires’. Unlike many other discourse-analytic research projects, these studies view discourse as a social practice designed for context of use. These studies are influenced by ethnomethodology and conversation analysis, both of which have been previously discussed.

I wish to look at one such study in this section and to make it problematical. I hope this problematization will aid my endeavour to show how, in discourse, orientations to subjects and objects can work together to create meanings, rather than work independently, or even oppose each other ‘a priori’ of participants’ concerns. However, before we come to this study, let us look at definitions of this term, ‘interpretative repertoire’. The first definition comes from Potter and Wetherell (1987), a book which inspects a wide range of the field of social psychology from a discursive perspective, set against more traditional viewpoints.

“Interpretative repertoires are recurrently used systems of terms used for characterizing and evaluating actions, events and other phenomena. A repertoire is constituted through a limited range of terms used in particular stylistic and grammatical constructions. Often a repertoire will be organized around specific metaphors and figures of speech (tropes).”

(p. 149)

The second definition comes from the same authors, Wetherell and Potter (1992). This time they are writing about the language of racism and the legitimation of exploitation. Their data comes from New Zealand:-

“By interpretative repertoire we mean broadly discernible clusters of terms, descriptions and figures of speech often assembled around metaphors or vivid images. In more structuralist language we can talk of these things as systems of signification and as the building blocks used for manufacturing versions of actions, self and social structures in talk. They are some of the resources for making evaluations, constructing factual versions and performing particular actions.”

(p. 90)

The authors stress that interpretative repertoires help us to understand how content is organized in language use, the functions of that use and the resources that we have available for the achievement of those functions.
Scientists' Discourse

This subsection will have direct relevance to education and bases for knowledge claims.

The discourse analytic study to be reviewed is the sociological study by Gilbert and Mulkay of scientists' talk (1984). This was the first study where the term 'interpretative repertoire' was used. Gilbert and Mulkay did not set out to produce a relativist account of what was going on in scientists' talk. The research began its life as a traditional piece, searching for one true version of events (at least, that's how they write it up, as a discovery account!). However, so the story goes, Gilbert and Mulkay were intrigued by the variability between and within accounts and decided to make this the topic of their study. The scientists they interviewed were biochemists, concerned with biogenetics, the chemistry of living matter. They were doing research on a molecule called adenosine triphosphate, which in animals is used to move and temporarily store energy within the cell. The process, by which this energy is stored, is entitled oxidative phosphorylation. To cut a long story short (these conclusions are presented as if in speech marks), Gilbert and Mulkay identified two repertoires that these scientists used when talking or writing about their research. The empiricist repertoire was talk about science divorced from all human interest, concern or motivation; such as, for example, can be found in journal articles. The other repertoire, the contingent repertoire, could be found in informal interview talk. This repertoire was concerned with the human element of scientific research - emotions, psychologies, interactions, personalities. The scientists used the contingent repertoire: 1) to error-account, by invoking the psychologies of those who opposed their scientific proposals. There is no greater insult to a scientist than to accuse him/her of possessing, say, a religious mania towards his/her scientific beliefs. If scientific beliefs become internalized, they become invalid; 2) to construct consensus in favour of their own research and deconstruct consensus against it. The authors identify the TWOD (Truth Will Out Device). This reconciles the two repertoires and constructs truth as unfolding over time. At present we may be confused by differing protestations but, in the end, truth will be victorious. The TWOD device acknowledges the existence of human elements in scientific developments, but perceives them as, in the end, being overridden by the facts of the matter; the pure, unadulterated truth which cannot be denied. The two repertoires are reconciled and the ultimate dominancy of the empiricist repertoire
proclaimed. (Of course there are discourses where the contingent repertoire rules, e.g. in the discourse of the sociologists of scientific knowledge).

*A Discussion of ‘Opening Pandora’s Box’*

*Reflexivity*

I am acutely aware that discourse analysis such as this overlooks many nuances and intricacies of interaction which conversation analysis would capture. Consider the following extract delivered by a biochemist named Pugh opposing the prevalent belief of the major scientist in the field, Spencer; a belief which Pugh sees as centring around membrane potential. The theory itself is not attacked by Pugh so much as the psychologies of its adherents. In Gilbert and Mulkay’s view, this extract is full of the contingent repertoire.

Extract Method.6 (Source 4E - Pugh 21)

“There is, to my way of thinking, not a single piece of evidence that will bear close examination for the Spencer model. And the crucial piece of evidence - Ditchburn has written in the last TIBS on the membrane potential and he has looked for that membrane potential for the last 15 years. There is no membrane potential, period. That’s a source of embarrassment to everybody, because the Spencer model requires it. He’s never seen it and they have pilloried him. Everybody is looking under the bed: did you do this? And did you do that? And he goes back each year and he does all the controls they claim he should do, and he does them. And he still gets the same answer - it isn’t there. Now they say, well - it’s like religion. People don’t know why they believe certain things. They believe them. Their fathers believed them. Their mothers believed them. So they believe them. It’s purely irrational now. There’s no-one I know can make a reasoned case for the Spencer model at the present time.”

[Pugh, 21] (p. 66)

Let us peruse a central part of this extract more closely:-

1. And he goes back each year
2. and he does all the controls
3. that they claim he should do,
4. and he does them.
Here people are massively complex. The frozen part of the data, in the analysis, is the orientation of the participants to the construction of the subject; how people approach their experiences (as seen through the so-called contingent repertoire). This, in the analysis, is not regarded as a discursive build-up, just as much concerned with object constructions as subject constructions. It is viewed as something to do with the stuff of social science rather than natural science. My contention would be that the two cannot be so divorced.

Even the realignment of the lines affords a different perspective on the data. To give a flavour of the kind of analysis I am advocating, I shall illustratively select from the lines above three details which, although potent, are not identifiable as tropes or images in a set repertoire. First, the present tense, the terms ‘back’ and ‘each year’ in line 1, the ‘still’ and ‘the same’ in line 5, even though they describe the actions of Ditchburn, have something to say about the consistency of the absence of the phenomenon. Secondly, Ditchburn’s passivity, his puppet nature, the control of others over him, displayed in line 3, is effective in removing his stake and enhancing the ‘reality’ of the non-existence of the phenomenon. Thirdly, lines 5 and 6 are presented almost as the answer to a question in a dialogue, as the second part of an adjacency pairing. Ditchburn is asking ‘reality’ a question and it is giving a definitive reply. ‘Reality’ is answering back; a potent warrant for Ditchburn’s findings.

In this data extract, the subject is indeed well constructed, but Gilbert and Mulkay, as analysts, orientate towards it exclusively, as if it were separate from other important issues. The object is constructed too:—

it isn’t there

and the subject construction, in true ethnomethodological analysis, would be viewed as aiding that construction. This discourse is not just about human relationships, rivalry, etc., as the authors would have us believe. It is also about ‘reality’ and concrete existences or non-existences.

The idea of the potentiality of discourses is very problematic in my view. For example, is it not possible that the so-called contingent repertoire could be used to
promote scholarship, rather than undermine it? (Indeed the authors do acknowledge this when they point out that one of the functions of the contingent repertoire is to gather consensus for one's own knowledge claim.) Is it not possible that the empiricist repertoire (equally contingent to my mind) could be used to undermine opponents? I feel that, if one looked carefully at specific instances and how they are occasioned, one would indeed discover such surprises.

Indexicality

Also in this study the form/function bond has been too firmly created, almost oblivious to the specific linguistic situations in which the forms occur; the prior discourse, the contributions of the social science researchers themselves, etc. are seriously undermined. It is very apparent that the following extract, for example, is addressed to social scientists:

Extract Method.7 (Source 5A - Richardson 12)

"People will pay attention to some people and not to others. And sometimes it's a very false sort of thing, because it also has mixed up in it the whole thing of charisma and how nice a person is rather than how competent they are. So it's a somewhat unreliable guide, but I'm sure it plays an important part in determining the course of events. [Pause] I think ultimately that science is so structured that none of those things are important and that what is important is scientific facts themselves, what comes out at the end."

[Richardson, 12] (pp. 92 & 93)

The accountabilities towards social science research and accountabilities towards his own profession as a scientist, I would argue, are what together produce the so-called TWOD but that does not mean that the TWOD has any reality beyond what is constructed in this particular discourse. Gilbert and Mulkay imagine that the TWOD reconciles the empiricist and contingent repertoires and indeed it is appreciated to see an acknowledgement that they can be reconciled and come together but there must be numerous ways in which a reconciliation takes place and potential talk about how it can be achieved, without a proper study of the context, does not do justice to talk.

I am here not primarily displaying a concern for who foots and receives a piece of discourse (see the interchange between Potter, 1996a and Leudar and Antaki, 1996). That would be a very realist pursuit. I am just displaying a concern for the
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acknowledgement that talk is generated, moulded and modified as it progresses and that statements are not static reifications which can be plucked out and given labels.

Ideology

One could almost read ‘Opening Pandora’s Box’ as a realist study with the sole differences from traditional studies of discourse being that the discourses are available rather than mandatory and that versions varying with functions are superficially acknowledged and investigated. It smacks of original research in SSK (Sociology of Scientific Knowledge), within which realism was often removed from the objective world but afforded to the social world and within which there are still those who, like Collins and Yearley (1992), although advocating methodological relativism, feel justified in adopting a social realist position within that framework, mainly for empiricist reasons. On the one hand, Collins and Yearley call out-and-out relativists ‘epistemological chickens’; on the other, people like Collins and Yearley are accused of ‘ontological gerrymandering’ by relativists (e.g. Woolgar, 1992). Gilbert and Mulkay would reply that it is the participants, the scientists, who are constructing the social, and indeed that is sometimes the case, as they construct their output towards social scientists, but, in general, I remain unconvinced by that argument, for reasons already stated.

Scientists themselves have often been keen to discredit the idea that social influences have importance in knowledge-construction (they have acknowledged them but have downplayed their importance - see the Richardson extract a few lines before this section) and this piece of research seems like a counter-move, especially with the inordinate amount of time it spends on the contingent repertoire. The point made in the next paragraph also lends credence to this hypothesis.

Gilbert and Mulkay view their research as being about scientists’ talk right from the start. They build up their investigations on a social structure pre-existent to the discourse which they are investigating. As, with almost all the data, we are presented with constructing people, rather than science, I would suggest that we do not hear this necessarily as scientists’ talk. As Potter (1996b) rightly points out:-

“.... categorizations can work to exclude potentially relevant considerations; they can gerrymander what is taken into account in a way that contributes to business at hand.”

(p. 16)
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Woolgar & Pawluch (1985), looking at social science research, also deal with gerrymandering among researchers and their tendency to categorize certain aspects of a situation as available for study and leave others as sacrosanct.

The six lines that I extracted from Pugh's account do not orientate to categories of person and have much to tell us about human actions in general and how they are viewed. If we construct categories outside of members' categorizations, we are going to find what we were looking for—things which make, for example, scientists' talk or teachers' talk different from the talk of the rest of society members. Gilbert and Mulkay, of course, have accountabilities to construct the category 'scientists'. If I am correct in viewing this research as a counter-move to scientists' own view of what they are about, then it is imperative that the category be constructed and then deconstructed to show scientists as being more human than scientific.

Billig et al. (1988) use a discursive approach to investigate ideological dilemmas. In the preceding discussion, I would be loath to undervalue the contribution of this research to the corpus of work on the functional use of language. It is deservedly a much referred-to piece of work. It is one of a small number of works which is considered to attend to more macro considerations than is thought to be normal in discourse research, which usually is thought to rely upon a build-up of research to attend to macro issues. Social scientists are often accountable to attend to these macro issues and the problem, that by generalizations you lose linguistic contexts, is largely ignored. This rendering of accountability also takes place under structuralist assumptions that teachers act and talk as teachers, scientists act and talk as scientists, etc., especially when encased by buildings (and nobody else does). I would dispute the accusation that macro issues are not being addressed in ethnomethodological research, as they are attended to frequently via participants' addressivities.

Repertoire analysis is a macro-level analysis, rather than a micro-level. The future predictive orientation of it connotes use within particular structural frameworks. For committed social scientists, of course, these aspects, which, for me, are problems, are instead positive attributes. Unlike conversation analysis, it is alleged, which highlights the trivial, this kind of analysis confronts the important issues of our time. It is also said that repertoire analysis can turn itself around and reflexively view its own practices, whereas conversation analysis is often accused of being an entirely empirical pursuit. However, I hope to show in this thesis that this is not the case. Important
issues, including macro issues, and reflexive issues can be addressed by conversation analysis nowadays.

Potter, himself having written a book using this kind of discourse analysis about the language of racism in New Zealand (Wetherell and Potter, 1992), now has certain reservations about it. Here is a quotation from a paper in which he discusses, in a question-and-answer format, constructionist approaches.

“Although the notion of interpretative repertoires has proved analytically fruitful, it has some limitations. For example, it is much more difficult to make clear and consistent judgements about the boundaries of particular repertoires outside of constrained institutional settings such as science discourse. Another problem is that the generality of the repertoire notion may obscure local interactional business done by particular discourse forms (see Potter, 1996b; Wooffitt, 1992)” (Potter, 1996c: p. 10)

Language is not as limiting as Wetherell and Potter make out. We must not think that the participant has been indoctrinated, in a Bakhtinian sense, with a particular cultural discourse.

Nor should we be afraid, as social scientists, that we would be promoting nationalist views by aligning ourselves with participants. Rest assured. Our participants are accountable to a culture which, post-Hitler, is wary of nationalism, and they display this accountability. No moral ground is lost. We can not assume society condones this type of talk.

Wetherell and Potter are also themselves relying upon the cultural assumption that acknowledging national identity is a demeaning, condescending, act. so to speak: but many social scientists now assert that ignoring nationalities is not the panacea once thought and that, on the contrary, acknowledging them is the cure for racism. These variabilities, of course, reflect the very nature of discourse that is portrayed in this thesis.

This imperative to acknowledge oppressed groups prior to analysis is the stuff of social science research and, if we adopt an ethnomethodological standpoint, there is a definite tension between our ideological and our ethnomethodological accountabilities, the latter based upon a realization that participants’ varying accounts, varying with functions and social actions, would be undermined against a backdrop of privileging of accounts both scientifically and morally. Many social scientists refuse to adopt a completely relativist standpoint because of this. The philosopher Rorty (1989),
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although criticizing Kant and Hegel for drawing attention to the manufactured nature of only scientific truth, nevertheless refutes complete relativism and elaborates on pragmatism (see also Rorty, 1987, pp. 4 & 5). Edwards et al (1994) have created quite a stir with their paper 'Death and Furniture', which has been viewed as taking relativism too far, in as much as they attend to constructions of things whose existence cannot be denied (e.g. tables) and things whose existence must not be denied (e.g. death). The authors now go to great pains to assert they are deconstructing realist arguments, not reality:-

"...the responses that Derek Edwards, Malcolm Ashmore and I (1994) developed to these arguments was not to argue directly against them, but to take apart the rhetoric on which they are based: decoupling the implied equivalence between relativism and lack of political commitment, and emphasizing that constructionist arguments are not aimed at denying the existence of tables (a very realist idea!) but exploring the various ways in which their reality is constructed and undermined.” (Potter, 1996b, p. 7)

Although I would agree wholeheartedly with this quotation because of the kind of researcher I am, there is no denying its positioning in a rhetorical argument, just like any other position.

From this discussion on repertoire analysis it would seem imperative that there be wide-ranging contemplation of methodological considerations in this area. Indeed some, e.g. Coyle (1995), have already been embarked upon.

Conclusion

This conclusion is certainly not a good-bye to any consideration of methods. I hope method will permeate my whole thesis. Indeed, one of the major aims of my thesis is to show ethnomethodological discursive practices at work and complain about how they are only partially taken on board by some analysts and thus infringed.

In this chapter I have aligned myself with certain discursive approaches and eschewed others, measuring them with ethnomethodological yardsticks. My mulling-over of principles of analysis will also afford the reader an insight into those things which I consider important in such an ethnomethodological analytic stance. One of these was the reflexivity aspect of talk, which, with respect to experiential claims within the construction of knowledge (my research topic), will come under scrutiny in the latter chapters of this thesis, when I consider how two participants’ orientations, subject and object constructing, can mutually aid (Chapters 4, 5 & 7) each other to
create a valid experience or collapse together, or separately, (Chapter 8) in the flow of speech.

For now, however, we shall highlight indexicality. In what kind of discursive environment are experiential claims to knowledge produced? We shall see in our next chapter - on knowledge construction, which will hopefully show how knowledge is constructed within the accountabilities of the ‘in situ’ talk. This shows the indexicality of talk which, I assert is only paid lip-service in the kind of research we have been discussing latterly.
CHAPTER THREE
THE CONSTRUCTION OF KNOWLEDGE

This chapter concerns itself with research already produced on knowledge construction. However, this is more than a mere literature review. I discuss in detail the construction of common knowledge, contextually consistent knowledge, procedural knowledge and the conversational style of ‘argumentation’; the latter under the umbrella heading of ‘conflict talk’. I have treated all these as separate entities under discrete sub-headings in order to talk about them, but, of course, all these interconnect and can weave themselves interminglingly into the flow of the talk as it is generated. Ideally, they must be shown to be participants’ categories, rather than mine.

This chapter is to display the indexical nature of experiential claims; to show the knowledge-construction contexts in which they are indexed and within which they perform various functions.

I parallel each piece of research with extracts from my own data. I should point out that I choose only very selective parts of other authors’ works and that these extracts should not be viewed as being representative of these works as a whole.

The purposes of this chapter are at least fourfold:-

1) Backwards looking, it will continue what I have already said about method and show the reader discourse/conversation analysis at work, using the same inferential procedures as the participants themselves use.

2) It will prepare the framework for my research on experiential claims, which will be mapped onto a background of knowledge construction. Later in my thesis I hope to show how the accountabilities of the knowledge construction context are important for the construction of the personal and objective orientations of the experiential claims. For example, the accountability to promote multiple knowledge-versions or to eliminate versions and forward one consensually-backed version can give rise to elaborations within these two experiential-claim orientations (In my playlet I myself display accountability to produce multi-versions of reality, whereas in my data extracts I display myself accountable to producing a single version.)

3) By the paralleling of my own data with already existent data, I attempt to substantiate a belief in the general applicability of conversation analytic claims. (Qualitative analysis often has to withstand criticisms of not being applicable to
all situations and qualitative data often has to withstand criticisms of not being a representative sample and of being specially selected.)

Relying on this notion of general applicability, I hope to show that the same analytic procedures that I apply on school data can also be applied to other knowledge-construction contexts unconnected with education as we understand it; unconnected with schools and such like. This I hope will justify collecting my own data from television programmes, family discussions, school lunch-time group meetings, as well as the perhaps more-to-be-expected formal class lesson. Perhaps I could have applied even a looser view of knowledge-construction contexts and looked for knowledge and experiential claims in post office queues, for example.

A standard macro-sociological outlook is inappropriate. I hope to show that the context is created through the talk. It should not be treated as pre-existent; a point I made in Chapter 2.

4) I wish to show that accountabilities to wider society and to that specific situation are addressed in the talk (and thus I undermine the importance of the distinction between ‘macro’ and ‘micro’ research in the field of Sociology.) This is one of the ways contexts are created and this is one of the situational aspects which make, say, a Clive Anderson programme slightly different from, say, a classroom lesson on friction. I chose the word ‘slightly’ with care, as I consider these situations to have more similar points of reference than diverse, as they abide by the same conversational rules. By the word ‘rules’ I do not mean action-determinants. These rules are normative and if they are infringed, appeals can be made and inferences drawn (see Edwards, 1997, Chapter One). The normative status of these rules is a participants’ concern. By studying participants’ reactions, we can determine these rules and discover normative expectations (Goffman, 1981: Heritage, 1984).

Let us now turn to knowledge construction.

Eliminating Alternative Versions

Common Knowledge

My first two extracts come from a work by Edwards and Mercer (1987) in which they display how the commonality of knowledge is constructed in some teachers’ discourse. Much of this book is centred around a series of lessons using a pendulum but my first
example comes, not from the pendulum lessons, but from a model-making session involving the use of clay. The authors show how the teacher invokes out-of-school experience to construct a ‘common knowledge’, relevant to the lesson in progress.

Extract 3.1 (Source Sequence 5.4)

PIGS’ EARS

T: ....Now / I don’t really like the way they’re joined. I think they / you should do this / at the front and at the back. / Hold it. Support it / because it’s very very flappy and thin / and then smooth over what you’ve been doing / and his ears can be wavy / or however you want them to be ‘cause pigs’ ears look nice / and they flap about / don’t they / when they run. Have you ever seen a pig running?

Ian: Yes
Pupil X: No
(Unidentified pupils speaking off camera)

Pupil Y: I’ve seen them on the farm.

T: Yes / if you call out pig pig pig they / often they think it’s food time for food and they come running and their ears flap about. Let’s bring them forward a bit /

(p. 72)

The last remark refers to the clay pigs’ ears. The / mark indicates a pause of less than two seconds and the .... indicates that the extracted sequence begins within a turn rather than at the beginning of it. Edwards and Mercer assure us:-

“This was typical of appeals by the teacher to out-of-school experience, invoking what could reasonably assumed to be common knowledge.” (p. 72)

Edwards and Mercer also state:-

“The mere assumption of common knowledge and values can be a powerful means of encouraging the pupils to adopt them without question.” (p. 75)

In this creation of common knowledge, television programmes play a prominent role.

We are told that pupils, however, normally act on the assumption that questions are about the proceedings in the classroom, not about external happenings. This corresponds to the general conversational principle, researched by linguists, that we
should only be asked questions about issues, to which we can reasonably be expected to know the answer (see Grice, 1975).

Here is an excerpt from my own data, in which the teacher can be seen to be appealing to common knowledge from outside of the school. The hardness/softness of glass is being discussed and the teacher draws the children’s attention to the glass foundry.

Extract 3.2 (Source AS/MP1)

588 Teacher: [ >Have< you been
589 to a glass (. ) foundry?
590 Andy: [ Yeh
591 Grant: [ (No-)
592 Eva: [ ( ) My [ mum has
593 Teacher: [ and s seen
594 the molten glass?
595 Eva: My mum has and she (. ) [ this man
596 Grant: [ I know
597 what it looks [ (like)
598 Eva: [ he got [ he he
599 Andy: [ I bought
600 some glass moulds
601 Eva: they made this < lovely um glass jar
602 or something
603 and he just picked it up >
604 whether there was a bubble in it
605 or something
606 but he just went (. )
607 zhoom [ ( )
608 Lena: [ It is hard
609 because if you just knock
610 it would break
611 ( )
612 Teacher: Yeh
but glass isn’t always like that.
The glass in the foundry when it’s being made
is like a liquid

The teacher initially gets some support for her construction of common knowledge from Andy (line 590), Eva (line 592), Eva (line 595), Grant (lines 596 and 597) and Andy (lines 599 and 600). However, Eva’s story, which begins on line 598 and is repaired and restarted and lasts from line 601 to line 607, emits a contrary message to the teacher’s, i.e. that hard glass can be found in a glass foundry. Eva’s story is presented as second-hand experience but she makes it her own in the telling. The noise effect (lines 606 and 607), the guessed-at motivation for the action (lines 604 and 605), the ‘justs’ (lines 603 and 606), to make the actions seem simple and familiar, all give the story intense credibility for us as listeners (see Chapter 7) but retaining it as her mother’s story, a reputable adult’s story, retains its authority also.

Lena gains confidence from this story to state categorically that glass is hard (lines 608 to 611). This gives us as analysts a clue as to the uptake of the story; the inferential messages that were received from it. Conversation is a joint venture and, by this orientation towards the story, Lena changes what it means.

The teacher then stresses the specificity of the instances when soft glass could be encountered in the foundry, emphasizing the specific time, place and moment in the production process when glass would be soft (lines 612 to 616). (This had the potential, which was not realized, of sparking off a debate about when does glass become glass, as in the argument in the abortion controversy about when does an embryo become a baby.)

As you can see, these pupils, unlike the pupils in the Edwards and Mercer data (Extract 3.1), are not accepting the constructed common knowledge without question. It is rough going for the teacher. This is further shown by anecdotes concerning hard glass which follow this extract (these will be cropping up on several occasions in this thesis) and the extract taken from Appendix M7 shows the teacher as bowing down: she has read somewhere that windows turn liquidy in warm weather; she does not know whether it is true; it is not detectable by visual perception: the knowledge comes as a shock (see Extract 3.3).
In Appendix MPI, lines 612 to 616, the teacher becomes more specific as the children first display a lack of willingness to be co-opted into her common-knowledge construction. She thus implies that their experience has not yet been wide enough to include this particular moment in the glass foundry. At this point it is still common knowledge, but perhaps only common knowledge for adults. By Appendix MP7, the knowledge has become very specific knowledge; no longer common knowledge. The following extract is taken from Appendix MP7, when the knowledge has become very specific.

Extract 3.3 (Source AS/MP7)

935 Teacher: Sometimes you get a shock though
936 ↑↓don’t you
937 something’s hard
938 that you think’s soft and
939 [ something’s soft that you think’s
940 Lena: [ A window is a bit soft (.)
941 and it’s definitely smooth
942 (2.0)
943 Teacher: I remember reading somewhere
944 that in hot weather
945 even windows start to err
946 (.6)
947 to run
948 as if they’re (. ) liquid.
949 You can’t really see it
950 but they start to become
951 a bit (. ) liquidy
952 (.6)
953 [ I don’t know whether that’s true
954 Andy: [ Crayons turn liquidy
955 Eva: Oh yeh=

This is now a very tentative approach on the part of the teacher. The teacher forwards as evidence a single vague reading reference, which she distances herself from:-
[ I don’t know whether that’s true ]

The windows:-

[ I don’t know whether that’s true ]

The teacher is modifying her approach to the liquidity of glass. She now constructs this knowledge as not self-evident, but as very selective knowledge.

You can’t really see it

and on line 953 she almost withdraws from the argument:-

[ I don’t know whether that’s true ]

The children respond well to this modification and almost-withdrawal, as can be seen from the following, although they are not willing to rescind their previous stance entirely and to state categorically that glass can be liquidy (Lena’s ‘a bit’, in line 940, and Andy’s substitution of ‘Crayons’ for ‘glass’, in line 954, display this partial retention of their previous stance):-

A window is a bit soft (. )
and it’s definitely smooth
(2.0)

and

Crayons turn liquidy

and

Oh yeh=
In conclusion, then, Edwards and Mercer find the construction of knowledge as common an effective device for the teacher to encourage the children to buy into that knowledge without question. I, on the other hand, found that children resisted the common-knowledge formulation. Why this difference? My data would suggest that the teacher is not as powerful as Edwards and Mercer’s data would indicate. I would forward the idea that the difference lies in the accountability of the children. In my data the children are accountable to ‘do thinking’ and ‘do argumentation’, and part of that entails not just accepting the obvious. In Edwards and Mercer’s example, the children are accountable to make realistic clay models of pigs. They want to make a model which would conform to everyone’s conception of what a pig is like and so the teacher’s appeal to common knowledge is more acceptable. You can see the accountability to ‘do thinking’ in this extract from similar data of mine; this time generated within a family discussion about a Christmas Lecture television programme. Pete may have arrived at ‘wrong’ answers but he constructs his thought processes, for which he is accountable. This data comes from Appendix FDI. Dad and the two sons are discussing how a spiral turns:-

Extract 3.4 (Source AS/ FDI)

493 Pete: ↑Dad
494 but if you turn it upside ↑d↓own .)
495 then it goes the other way.
496 Ken: Yeh
497 Pete: so how do you know
          which way up to put it?
498 Dad: (No)
499 I think it doesn’t.
500 Pete: If you’ve >got< a spiral
      and  [ >you< turn it upside down
502 Ken: [°<No it doesn’t Pete>°
503 Pete: ↑Doesn’t it (                               )
504 (2.6)
505 Okay (. ) it doesn’t (.)
506 I just thought it did
Pete's construction of thought processes occurs in lines 506 to 509 with the word 'thought' (line 506) and 'confusing' (line 509). Dad also displays his thinking accountabilities in line 499 with his contribution - 'I think it doesn't.'

Contextually Consistent Knowledge

My next example comes from the same book, Edwards and Mercer (1987). This example is concerned with, what traditional educational researchers would call, ritual, as opposed to principled, knowledge. Ritual knowledge is viewed by this body of people as a form of procedural knowledge and nowadays it is frowned upon in learning contexts. Children, who have only ritual knowledge, are considered not to have made learning their own, e.g. they are 'barking at print' or they are reciting times-tables verbatim. They have been indoctrinated. The reason for the reaction against this form of knowledge is largely due to the influence of cognitive as opposed to behaviourist psychologies. Edwards and Mercer draw attention to three theorists whose work relies on the ritual/principled-knowledge dichotomy:-

“Similar sorts of distinctions can be found in work as diverse as that of Kuhn (1962), in describing the procedural, routine work of ordinary science; of Piaget (1970), in accounting for the development of higher forms of thought and understanding out of the earlier coordinations of practical actions; and even that of Bernstein (1971), where a distinction is drawn between an active, autonomous orientation to ‘principles’ that he attributes to middle-class pupils, and a more passive orientation to ‘operations’ or how things work attributed to working-class pupils.”  

(p. 97)

Conversation analysts, of course, would not be evaluative and condemn contextually consistent constructions of knowledge. For conversation analysts, what educationalists would call, ritual knowledge is just knowledge which constructs itself as knowledge self-consistent with the current educational context, without resource to outside contexts or inside mentalities - just as common knowledge is constructed as being aligned with knowledge in a wider or even a universal social context. Concerned with situated discourse and the 'in situ' construction of knowledge, Edwards and Mercer set
out to study how joint understanding is an accomplished achievement. Much of my data under the TS and MP Appendices show how so-called principled knowledge is an accomplished achievement and how cognitive mediation is implicated in the discourse, as are individual idiosyncrasies, moving us away from so-called ritual knowledge, towards ‘argumentation’ and specificity. In Extract 3.4 we saw such a movement away from common knowledge to greater specificity. Time constructions, place constructions, specific-causation constructions, etc. all play their part to display cognitive processes and hence promote the impression of the formation of principled, rather than ritual, knowledge.

Edwards and Mercer, however, are of the opinion that most knowledge-construction situations could be mapped onto a Vygotskian (Vygotsky, 1978) model of learning with a hand-over of knowledge from teacher to pupil in the ‘zone of proximal development’. Edwards and Mercer inform us that, in interviews, however, most teachers asserted avidly their affiliation to a Piagetian model of learning; the child allowed to learn through exploration with the environment and through individual cognitive development. As we shall perhaps see in our discussion of the following data, though, accountabilities to a Piagetian model could manifest themselves in the construction of contextually consistent knowledge.

One of Edwards and Mercer’s examples of teaching and learning discourse which produces contextually consistent knowledge is as follows, where the teacher elicits the notion of the angle variable for the pendulum experiment in the midst of the generation of other variables, e.g. length of string, difference in weight, etc.

Extract 3.5 (Source Sequence 6.6)
(The teacher reaches for the bob on Jonathan’s pendulum)

T: Watch me / operate this pendulum here. Watch what I’m doing. I’m touching the string. I’m touching the bob. What other thing can I change? I’m changing / now.

(She holds the bob higher and lets it go.)

Antony: You could hold it right up.

T: So you could change the /
Construction of Knowledge

Antony: The distance of the swing. 
T: What do we call this?

(Teacher moves finger around triangular gap between post & string)

Jonathan: The erm.
Pupils: Angle.
Jonathan: Angle.
T: The angle that we start our swing from. I wonder if that would make a difference.
Jonathan: Yeh.

(p. 109)

Why, one might ask, does the teacher extract the term ‘angle’ in this fashion? Why does she not just tell the children what an angle is and that the angle is not an important variable, although one might think the contrary. Mehan (1986) draws our attention to what he calls ‘known-information’ questions and considers them unique to schooling. He is mistaken. They will exist in any situation where one person stands accountable for the application of the cognitive processing or memory-processing of another towards a task. In this post-Piagetian era, school is definitely one of these situations. Knowledge must be exhumed from the mind and applied (education in its proper sense from the Latin word ‘educere’). This is similar to the Platonic concept of the drawing out of ‘innate knowledge’ from the pupil. We find this in Plato’s ‘Meno’ (a reproduced version, 1987). Piaget has also brought in his wake a valued status for empiricism. Hence the teacher’s insistence that the pupils find out, they experiment. The results of the experiments of individuals, however, can easily be discounted, as the teacher directs the discourse towards the common knowledge which the lesson is to underline.

The excerpt from my own data, which I have chosen to illustrate this same point of contextually consistent knowledge, comes from a whole-class-plus-teacher lesson on friction. The teacher is trying to extract from the class some knowledge that was constructed in the preceding lesson - that pebbles give a surface more friction. The term ‘pebbles’ has been aligned with ‘small stones’ in the last lesson. The implication that knowledge can be learnt in one situation (the last lesson) and reapplied to another context (the teacher’s car journey) is yet again prevalent. Again there is no evidence of
Construction of Knowledge

the thinking process per se, just recall, and therefore traditional educational researchers
might term this ritual knowledge. This data comes from Appendix F3.

Extract 3.6 (Source AS/F3)

110 Teacher: Right
111 Why didn’t I skid on places
112 where the gritting lorry had been? (.)
113 putting down little
114 very very small pebbles? (.)
115 Yes Andy
116 Andy: Because the gravel puts friction
117 down onto the ice.
118 Teacher: Because?
119 Andy: Because it makes friction
120 because of (the) gravel.
121 (1.6)
122 Teacher: Speak up Andy.
123 Because it makes friction
124 Andy: Because of the: small stones.
125 Teacher: Yes
126 it it (.) it gives the surface
127 more friction
128 doesn’t it?
129 because small stones has more f
130 a surface of small stones
131 has more friction
132 than a surface of ice.

The construction of this contextually consistent knowledge centres around a doing of
seeming non-hearing on the teacher’s part. After Andy’s first attempt at supplying an
answer, the teacher only accepts one word:-

118 Teacher: Because?
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After his second attempt she concurs with the following: -

123 Because it ↑makes ↑friction

Andy then adds

124 Andy: Because of the: small stones.

and this is approved by the teacher: -

125 Teacher: Yes

‘Gravel’ has been changed into ‘small stones’ and this accords better with the knowledge constructed in the previous lesson on friction.

Bilmes (1992) has this to say about mishearings

“The conversation analyst will not ordinarily want to say that a particular utterance evidences a mishearing unless a participant has treated it as such. Even when a participant produces a clearly irrelevant response, it may be treated by an interlocutor as a deliberate evasion, a snub, or an admonition ... rather than as evidence of mishearing.” (p. 96)

In the case in question the teacher seems to be ‘doing a non-hearing’ but notice that Andy does not merely repeat his response; he reformulates it, which implies that he is not treating the teacher’s action as a non-hearing. Sacks (1992), in Lecture 27, also addresses the question of mishearings. He suggests that often there are taboos on hearing because of social conventions about what is permissible in verbal interchanges. Here is the exchange which Sacks presents to us in this lecture: -

Extract 3.7 (Source Lecture 27)

Roger: Are you just agreein’ because you feel you want to uh ...  
Jim: Hm?  
Roger: You just agreeing?  
Jim: What the hell’s that  
Al: It’s // Agreeing?
Construction of Knowledge

Roger: Agreeing.
Jim: Agreein? 
Roger: Yeah.
Al: With us. Just going along with us.
Ken: Agreein'.
Jim: No.

(p. 450)

Sacks proposes that Jim’s resistance to Roger’s question stems out of a normal discursive reluctance to display his inner mind to perfect strangers. He is acting as if Roger is infringing conversational rules by asking him to do so (a conversational rule similar to those in linguistics of Grice, 1975, within whose theory interactants are very sensitive to normative expectations and are acutely aware of their accountability to produce appropriate length and relevancy in their turns). Whereas probing into inner mentalities is overstepping the mark in a situation such as this, asking a stranger to categorize him/herself is standard practice on first meeting. Jim reacts as if it is this he is being asked to do:-

Jim: Agree? 

as if he has been requested to categorize himself as a green something-or-other.

In the same way, the teacher in my own data is resisting knowledge which does not exactly accord with the contextual knowledge previously created. I do not want to imply that Jim and the teacher are artful or full of pretence or are split like schizophrenic personalities into beings with an outside action/inside thoughts dichotomy. Conversation analysts do not assume there is anything other than the talk, which sequentially generates itself. However, on a reflexive note, it is interesting that to forward this caveat, I have to construct my own persona and divide it into an intentions/action contradictory framework.

Procedural Knowledge

We return to, what traditional educational researchers would term, ritual knowledge. Edwards and Mercer (1987) liken it to procedural knowledge, which informs us how to behave and of which there is plenty in schools. In the second piece of research on knowledge construction which I would like to examine (Edwards, 1993), I would like
Construction of Knowledge

to focus upon an amusing extract where the children show confusion between ‘ritual knowledge’ and ‘procedural affairs’. The children are reconstructing the knowledge conveyed to them by Mark, the gardener, at a greenhouse which they had visited. In the Edwards’ article, this is labelled as Extract 6: Extract 3.8 (Source Extract 6)

64 Bobby: I need to go to the bathroom.
65 T: Go ahead, Bobby. Who wants to go next, raise your hand.
66 ((Christina raises hand))
67 T: Christina, see, you do remember!
68 ((Christina says something to another child))
69 T: Tell me what you want to say.
70 Christina: Uhh.
71 T: The first thing was, ‘Plants don’t [ only ] grow from seeds’
72 Christina: [ We thought you meant-, ]
73 T: No.
74 Christina: Well, I don’t want to go second.
75 T: Sally?

(p. 215)

Christina displays her hearing of the teacher’s request on line 65 as a request to know who wanted to go to the toilet, instead of an invitation to contribute an item of knowledge about plant growth. Edwards, in this same article, notes how a teacher sets out to extract nineteen knowledge contributions about plant growth from a class because there are nineteen class members - each piece of knowledge assigned to an individual child. Often the structure of a lesson influences the knowledge created. I shall refer to this as procedural knowledge and we shall remember it is a kind of contextually consistent knowledge, what might be termed by traditional educational researchers as ritual knowledge, produced, in this case, by the structuring of the talk rather than by, what could be called, content alignment. In this thesis, however, I would wish to sever this traditional form/content dichotomy and deconstruct all these hierarchical categories of knowledge. All talk is structured and context-sensitive. Knowledge-construction talk continually introduces warrants and endorsements for the
versions of knowledge the flow of talk has created, or for alternative versions, if the accountability is to produce alternative versions, as is the case in ‘argumentation’ (see a later section of this chapter). Constructing a version that you imply would make sense to everyone or constructing a version that you imply would fit in with the school curricular logic or school procedures are just some ways of warranting your version. There are, of course, countless more. So, as I resurrect these categories of knowledge, I would also like to deconstruct them and point out they are ‘ways of talking’, nothing more and nothing less.

My own data often display procedural rigours in the creation of knowledge. In the midst of such frameworks, what traditionalists might term communal, ritual knowledge is constructed, despite the surrounding ambience of an educational system which formulates itself on the Piagetian principles of encouraging individualistic, mind-mediated knowledge, produced via experience. This is viewed as a paradox by those educational researchers who believe that talk is not context-sensitive but reflects something real, in this case opinions and ideologies. The following is a rather bizarre example of knowledge being generated through strict procedures. This example comes from Appendix Fl of my own data. The children as a class are deciding which surface produces the most friction - a surface of tarmac, carpet or pebbles.

Extract 3.9 (Source AS/Fl)

410 Teacher: Right vote for it.
411 (1.2)
412 (The) tarmac vote?
413 Child: One-
414 Child: Three-
415 Child: Three-
416 Teacher: Oh-
417 Child: Six-
418 Teacher: you oh hands > went up went up <
        very strag
        in a very straggly fashion there.
        Hands down.
420
421
422 I don’t think that’s won.
423 Carpet
Construction of Knowledge

424 (2.0)
425 Child: One
426 Teacher: Right (.)
427 Hands down.
428 ↑Pebbles
429 (1.2)
430 Child: ↑Ye:h
431 Child: Pebble ↓busters
432 Child: It wasn’t
433 Teacher: Right (. ) I think pebbles has won that one.
434 Child: Ye:h ((cheeringly))
435 Someone(s): ((loud chatter))
436 Child: I did one five (. ) I did one ( )
437 Child: [ ( ) six
438 Teacher: QUIET (. )
439 Child: Now what is there about pebbles (. )
440 Child: You forgot- (to) cross it ↓out

Notice how on line 439 the request for justification of the majority decision that a surface of pebbles has more friction than tarmac or carpet comes after the knowledge has been communally constructed. In discursive material the experiential claim positionally can come after the knowledge claim, as well as before it, and experience can be constructed as reinforcing an already existent knowledge state as well as be constructed as instructional in introducing people to knowledge. In traditional (empiricist) theories, on the other hand, we are usually informed experience precedes knowledge and is causally responsible for creating it.

In this extract the taking-sides, the almost personification of the three candidates, the cheering, the excitement, remind one very much of a football match. The rules of fair play are also invoked.

440 Child: You forgot- (to) cross it ↓out

It must not be allowed to compete again. That would be unfair. Being decisive is the name of the game. Decisions are black and white.
It is not difficult to imagine other situations at school where decisiveness would be viewed as being inappropriate. Compare this data with my data concerning the glass foundry in Appendix MP1.

Repeat of Extract 3.2 (Source AS/MP1)

The teacher is warning against too hasty conclusions and later displays her own indecision.
As I have intimated previously, one can receive insight into the structural differences of two extracts if one studies accountabilities. The children in the friction data are accountable to produce an hierarchical list. Support matters more in the discourse than validity of position. Football discourse and even parliamentary discourse have often many elements of this bear-garden quality.

On the other hand, the children in the data concerning material properties are accountable to show thinking processes and not to accept obvious conclusions. This leads us on to situations where the accountability is for the production of multiple versions of knowledge, rather than a consensual one. Again the differentiation between these two situations is a manufactured one because, for example, versions in conflict talk can be backed up by appeals to a consensus beyond the talk and consensually constructed versions can always be countered in the flow of talk. Again, we are left with ‘ways of talking’, rather than anything which can successfully be abstracted.

Promoting Alternative Versions

Conflict Talk

We must remember in our perusal of conflict talk that it is the discourse which is accountable for alternative versions of identity, knowledge, etc. Common-sense knowledge orientates participants towards the ‘existence’ of a single identity or knowledge version, a single version of ‘reality’ (see Pollner, 1975 and 1987).

‘Argumentation’

‘Argumentation’ concerns itself with a plurality of claims, often constructed as from identity sources, but the identities are not the sole warrant for the claims. The versions are rhetorically elaborated to be convincing. Identities, too, when introduced, can often be developed away from present claim(s).

This feature of ‘argumentation’ is focused upon in the fourth piece of work on knowledge construction which I want to introduce. As regards my own data, ‘argumentation’ is displayed in my material properties’ and senses’ data especially. The work of another author is a Ph. D. thesis by Candela (1995), wherein she displays how pupils have space in lessons to relay and air their views and opinions. This counteracts a prevalent view that the teacher always has supreme power over the knowledge constructed in schools. This work has been translated from the Spanish, as Candela lives and works in Mexico. The data in Candela’s thesis is collected from
classrooms engaging in science lessons. Candela discovers that, within the framework of the lessons, the children have ample scope to present their opinions; the teacher often opening up avenues for their contributions through ‘argumentation’. This is very reminiscent of Mehan’s findings (1979). Mehan suggested that children who learnt the format of lessons could exploit their knowledge of those formats to inject their own views. In Mehan’s views a typical pedagogic interaction consists of an initiation, a reply and an evaluation (cf. Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975); the initiation and the evaluation being the preserve of the teacher and the reply being the arena that the pupils can exploit in order to make their inputs into the knowledge-constructing process. Psathas (1992) too, more recently, in his investigation of a garden lesson, identifies an extended-sequence format mushrooming over the lesson. Mehan (1979) encapsulates this structuralist approach in the following quotation:-

“Hence directives and informatives (calls for procedural action and the passing on of information etc.) ‘frame’ the elicitation of academic information that comprises the interior of lessons, thereby distinguishing lessons from other parts of the stream of ongoing behaviour.”  

However, as we have already seen in the excerpt from Edwards (1993), procedural and contextually consistent knowledge cannot easily be separated and I would maintain that knowledge is created in the midst of other sense-making activities rather than in a separate unadulterated capsule.

Candela (1995) subtly forms a bridge between these two camps. She seems to be concurring with the idea of ‘school interactional rules’ (p. 204) but stresses that they are publicly available for disputation and not hidden and imposed as she avers is the conclusion of Edwards and Mercer (1987). Contrary to Mehan (1979) she shows how pupils can interpose their offerings across the whole lesson span, including, for example, the evaluation sections.

Candela (1995) sees the situations she studies as orienting towards consensus as opposed to imposition or a maintenance of difference (Billig, 1987). She refers us to Grimshaw (1990) on conflict talk. However, she stresses that consensus cannot be achieved at all costs in the face of inadequate ‘argumentation’. Also she warns us that, in the classroom, various versions are often simultaneously being constructed and often these are allowed to stand uncontested and one true version is not sought. However, this does not deter Candela’s opinion that teachers and pupils often use preference structure (Pomerantz, 1984b and Bilmes, 1987) as a move towards consensus. This, to
my mind, creates an unfortunate image of participants using preference structure at will and of discourse being manipulated by people.

It has certainly to be admitted that preference for agreement is not always in operation. My own view would be that we would have to look at accountabilities and also we have not to become too focused on the consensual nature or otherwise of the outcome, the product of the discourse. Rather we have to view discourse as a process which indeed Pomerantz' preference-for-agreement proposition does. Edwards (1995b) warns us of concluding that Sacks' CA approach implies a consensus conception of social life (p. 582). Looking at this matter from an accountabilities perspective, if, in the classroom, the accountability is to display our cognitive thinking processes, then it does not matter if various versions of the world are produced, but it does matter if 'argumentation' is deemed inadequate, illogical or half-baked. If, on the other hand, the accountability is towards producing a scientific version of the 'real' world, then multi-versions will be invalidated; one true version will be sought after. Perhaps, in the first scenario, 'argumentation' will have a higher status than in the second, where the orientation will be towards agreement. We can perhaps see a reflection of 'progressive education' in the first scenario and of 'traditional education' in the second. Most lessons are a mixture of accountabilities, not separate as I have just implied, neither restricted to the two story lines just illustrated. The accountabilities shift and change in the moment-to-moment sequential movement of the interaction. It is certainly clear that we cannot just think in terms of aims and objectives of lessons to discover accountabilities.

This does not mean that I would argue with Pomerantz' (1984b) preference-for-agreement generalization findings. Her discoveries do not shut the door on the occurrence of disagreements. However, I would disagree that disagreement is always marked. In certain contexts disagreement is not often marked and 'argumentation', where the participants are accountable to present varying accounts to justify their knowledge claims, is one of these contexts. No apology need be given for clashes of opinion. Their production is what is expected.

Let us now look at some of Candela's data closely which will lead us into experiential claims in 'argumentation' and thus into the next chapter on the invocation of experiential 'I' and 'he/she/they' claims. This data comes from a chapter by Candela entitled 'Argumentation and Science'. Look at this oppositional and confrontational 'argumentational' sequence:-
Extract 3.14 (Source Extract 2.16)

197 Rosa: If you put oil on the candle, will it light?
198 Rodolfo: It won’t light. That’s why it has a wick.
199 Ch: It’ll light.
200 Ch: It won’t light. (some others)
201 Rodolfo: It’ll light, but we’ll get burnt.
202 B1: The oil gives force to the flame, so it’ll burn.
203 B2: It’ll burn because oil is flammable.
204 T: Yes. Now your classmate is giving an explanation.
205 It’ll burn because oil is combustible.

The children do not need disagreement markers, as in the situation they have a licence to produce different versions. The explanation (line 203) is revered and couched in technical terms by the teacher. Good ‘argumentation’ is applauded. The teacher, on line 205, endorses the proposition which has issued through ‘good argumentation’, even though no consensus has been reached about the answer to Rosa’s question. An explanation wins the day. An accepted version of reality is not sought.

Another example from Candela’s data, where the teacher does not seem to be interested in a correct version of the world, but instead an explanation between a possible model and several consequences of it, is as follows. This data originally came from Candela (1991). Knowledge that the planets turn on their own axes as they rotate around the sun is being constructed. The teacher demonstrates a scientifically unsound version of the movement of the planets.

Extract 3.15 (Source Extract 2.11)

((The teacher physically moves a boy as if in orbit, but making sure his face is always to the sun.))

T: Why don’t they turn like this?
G: Because it would only get hot on one side and it would be cold on the other.
B1: Because there’d only be seasons on one side.
B2: Because there wouldn’t be any night and day.

(pp. 110 & 111)
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Part of Candela’s analysis of this extract is as follows:

“...persuasion about the validity of an explanation is done by showing that if the phenomenon could be explained in another way it would not be coherent with what has been established discursively as the experience (day and night, seasons, alternation of hot and cold).”

The status of the contribution to the ‘argumentation’ is assessed in the context of the discourse rather than in the context of an objective, real, external world.

My own data to show that the adequacy of the ‘argumentation’ is contingent on the discourse context comes from Appendix F4, part of the second lesson on friction. The teacher is trying to determine why snow was classed as slippier than glass in a communal vote.

Extract 3.16 (Source AS/F4)

228 Teacher: [Right why (.) now-
229 why did snow come first then (.)
230 and not glass?
231 (2.0)
235 Teacher: ↑Yes Jack
236 Jack: (Snow has ice in)
237 Someone(s): ((talking))
238 Teacher: Uh- can I hear Jack please (.6)
239 Jack: >Because< snow snow has ice in
240 ↑a↓nd (.) if it if it just then melted
241 it might come (.) into slush.
242 Teacher: Right so snow has ice ↑in it.
243 And if it melts it turns into slush.
244 And and what’s special about slush
245 then Jack?
246 Jack: (It’s) slippy.
247 Teacher: It’s slippy is it?
248 Jack: Yeh
The construction of a relationship between snow and ice (line 239) - ice was the ‘winner’ in the lack-of-friction battle in the previous lesson - endorses the validity of snow’s suitability for a successful position this time. ‘Slush’ is constructed as a form of ‘snow’, but equivalent to ice, and which manifests itself after the melting process. The it is’s in lines 240 and 241, it seems to me, are deliberately vague to retain the two concepts of ice and snow in them.

240 and (.) if it just then melted
241 it might come (.) into slush.

The teacher has engaged in a seeming non-hearing in line 238 and then Jack, in line 239, displays a lack of confidence in his initial formulation on line 236. Thus:-

236 Jack: (Snow has ice in)

becomes

239 Jack: >Because< snow snow has ice in

plus the creation of the slush, a linguistic shift. Thus slush is equated to ice but it is not exactly ice, as the teacher has not accepted this formulation. Ice and slush are slippy (the slippiness of ice has already been established in the previous lesson) and as slush has been constructed as coming from snow, this validates snow’s high positioning in the lack-of-friction league.

We have already seen how knowledge is created intrinsically to the discourse in my section on contextually consistent knowledge (this chapter), where I produced my data from Appendix F3, in which ‘gravel’ had to be metamorphosized into ‘small stones’ to fit in with preceding discourse. Interestingly that too involved a seeming non-hearing on the part of the teacher. That seeming non-hearing functioned as an inroad into the construction of the contextually consistent knowledge. Here the seeming non-hearing almost repudiates the ritual knowledge. The reason for that is that the first construction by Jack

236 Jack: (Snow has ice in)
creates a conglomeration of snow and ice, which two entities, in the organization of the two lessons, the teacher has been responsible for keeping separate.

We are beginning to understand the falsehood of differentiating between our chapter subheadings. 'Argumentation' is beginning to look as if it sometimes might lead to the creation of contextually consistent knowledge.

Now for another piece of Candela’s data from a chapter on 'Consensus Orientation'. What I have just been saying about contextually consistent knowledge, knowledge intrinsic to the lesson(s), and how it is all knitted together to make cohesive sense, would certainly indicate an orientation towards consensus. Pollner too (1975 and 1987) shows how ‘reality disjunctures’ are ironed out. However, I would want to argue that not all knowledge-construction situations would exhibit this orientation, dependent upon accountabilities within the context. As will be shown, there are sometimes moves away from common knowledge and common experience to expert knowledge and expert experience, where a consensus of opinion is not sought, as this would threaten the expert status of the knowledge or experience.

Extract 3.17 (Source Extract 3.1)

155  T:  >lead doesn’t weigh very much.
       * * * * * * *
159  B4:  (*) NEITHER DOES STEEL.
160  B19:  (*) I said copper
161  B?:  (*) copper doesn’t weigh either (.) teacher
162  B19:  [ I said copper
163  T:  (*) STEEL DOESN’T WEIGH EITHER?
       (.2)
164  G16:  (*) it does weigh. (.)
165  B4:  (*) not much.

(*) signals background noise (I have modified the symbol), which Candela views as an indication of dissent.

Candela sees two consensus moves here. One comes from the teacher in a move Candela entitles ‘topic management’ (line 163). The co-ordination of interaction, she writes, is a discursive move oriented towards consensus construction (p. 166). I would
probably refute this, especially as, in line 163, the teacher repeats with a question intonation which Candela herself admits has the function of denying the content of the repeated statement (Pomerantz, 1984b). The second consensus move comes from B4 in line 165.

165 B4: (*) not much.

On page 107 Candela calls this an ‘extreme case softener’ with a reference to Edwards (1997). ‘Extreme case formulations’ themselves were brought to the attention of conversation analysts by Pomerantz (1986). B4’s original position on line 159 is not relinquished but B4 has made a modificatory consensual move to reconcile his position with G16’s and probably the teacher’s, both extreme positions, i.e. steel’s not weighing much or steel’s weighing a lot.

At the beginning of this chapter I introduced some data of mine on hard/soft glass (Extract 3.3). The teacher adhered to descriptions of soft glass in the glass foundry; the children adhered to narratives of hard glass breaking. The extreme case softening came in lines 935 to 953 with a climbing down by the teacher to accommodate the children’s views.

Repeat of Extract 3.3 (Source AS/MP7)

935 Teacher: Sometimes you get a shock though
936 ↑d↓on’t you
937 something’s hard
938 that you think’s soft and
939 [ something’s soft that you think’s
940 Lena: [ A window is a bit soft (.)
941 and it’s definitely smooth
942 (2.0)
943 Teacher: I remem↑b↓er reading somewhere
944 that in hot weather
945 even windows start to err
946 (.6)
947 to run
948 as if they’re (. liquid.
You can’t really see it but they start to become a bit (.) liquidy (.6) I don’t know whether that’s true

Andy: [Crayons turn liquidy]

Eva: Oh yeh=

Now the softness is not a constituent feature of all glass but instead ‘a window’ (line 940) or ‘windows’ (line 945) and only ‘in hot weather’ (line 945). The liquidity of glass is diluted to

as if they’re (.) liquid

and

a bit (.) liquidy

This knowledge is restricted; it is not generally known.

I remember reading somewhere

The knowledge is not only restricted but it is contrary to common sense:-

Teacher: Sometimes you get a shock though

The children respond well to these softeners and are ready partially (the reference is to ‘crayons’, not ‘windows’) to co-opt into the teacher’s version of knowledge:-

Andy: [Crayons turn liquidy]

Eva: Oh yeh=

Conclusion

In this chapter I hope that I have done justice to the four aims set out initially.
We shall be meeting some more of Candela's data in the next chapter despite my now, to a great extent, leaving behind the data of others and centre-staging my own data. The scene is now set for its mass entry.

Let us now move on to an examination of the invocation of experiential claims. Here we shall be re-acquainted with some of my own data already presented, as well as introduced to some new data of mine.
CHAPTER FOUR
PERSONALIZED INVOCATION OF EXPERIENTIAL CLAIMS
WITHIN THE CONSTRUCTION OF KNOWLEDGE
1) ‘I’ and ‘He/She/They’ Experiential Claims

This chapter will concern itself with experiential claims within the social construction of knowledge. I shall deal with claims in their personalized modes - ‘I’ and ‘he/she/they’ claims in this chapter and ‘we’ and ‘you’ claims in the next. I hope to show how the choice of person is often appropriate to the knowledge context and to the preceding discourse. The identity of the teller and experiencer are often worked up in the telling and subtly linked to the knowledge creation. These ‘I’ and ‘he/she/they’ claims are often produced in situations where alternative versions are being promoted (see previous chapter) and, as a consequence, have to be rhetorically well-boosted.

The first invocations of experiential claims which we shall ponder upon are ‘I’ claims. In constructionist literature there has been a lot of output about the self (e.g. Harré, 1983; Henriques et al, 1984; Shotter, 1984; Wetherell, 1984; Gergen, 1988 and Hollway, 1989) with varying degrees of a realistic or relativistic perspective, but here I shall treat the self as a discursive feature just like any other.

‘I’ Experiential Claims
My first example comes from the Clive Anderson programme.

a) Elephant humour
Extract 4.1 (Source AS/CA6)

554 Clive: err got another question with (.)
555 to do with animals
556 < Do animals have a sense of humour? >
557 Jessica: .hhh I think animals have
558 a sense of humour
559 but I could be accused of being
560 desperately anthromor anthropomorphic
561 for [ saying so
562 Clive: [ Yeh
Personalized Experiential Claims: 1

563 Jessica: I mean scientists are always very stuffy about the fact that you shouldn’t try and put human feelings [ and human emotions onto animals

568 Clive: [ Yeh

569 Jessica: but I once watched a television presenter who was standing in front of an elephant enclosure trying to do a link and he got the link wrong

574 Clive: Umm

575 Jessica: and the elephant was interested in what was going on= the elephant put her trunk over the (. ) man’s shoulder (. ) ((slight swallow)) and he kept setting the link wrong because the elephant kept fondling him (. ) in front

583 Clive: Yes

584 Jessica: and he couldn’t concentrate and say his words while he was being fondled.

587 So after about the third attempt he slapped the elephant on the trunk

589 Clive: Umm

590 Jessica: the elephant withdrew her trunk and in the next take of the link she gently put her trunk over (. ) with ↓during in the end of it

594 Audience: ((laughter))

595 Jessica: and smeared it
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596 all across his [ front
597 Clive: [ ((laughs)) ( )
598 Jessica: If that doesn't display a sense of humour
599 [ I don't know what does
600 Clive: [ Yes (. )
601 that's a sort of err
602 a sort of Jeremy Beadle
603 of the elephant world
604 Audience: ((laughter))

In my analysis I shall attempt to separate the invocation of experiential claims from their legitimation, which I shall reserve for another chapter, but we must remember their separateness is a device for thesis-writing, hopefully to enhance its readability, rather than a reality. As I have stressed, they often reflexively feed into each other to uphold the knowledge claim. This chapter will concentrate on the orientation towards the person(s) in the experience, as will the next chapter. Chapter 7 will deal with the construction of the objective reality.

As you can see, Jessica’s experiential claim is a lengthy one. She is accountable in the situation to give knowledgeable answers to questions, in this particular instance, to Clive’s question:—

556 < Do animals have a sense of humour? >

At the beginning of the programme she has been introduced as the expert on serious animal issues:—

Extract 4.2 (Source AS/CA beg)

1 Clive: Let’s turn to some more serious questions
2 about real animals
3 and I have with me (. )
4 Doctor Jessica Holmes
5 a zoologist
This means that, in Extract 4.1, she is accountable for more than just supplying a second part to the first part of an adjacency pair (see Schegloff and Sacks, 1974; Atkinson and Drew, 1979, on conditional relevancy). In this context a simple ‘yes’ on the subject of the existence of humour in animals will not suffice, although one could imagine situations where it would be sufficient. For example, if Clive approached the audience on this subject, a mere ‘yes’ reply might be all that was expected or even tolerated. A member might have to explain him/herself if offering more than this. Jessica’s task, however, is the further one of forwarding controversial argumentation against the views of absent significant others. At the end of the programme Clive intimates that this has been one of her tasks, with perhaps a hint that she has not one hundred percent succeeded:-

Extract 4.3 (Source AS/CA end)

606 >(Well I think you’ve)< shattered 607 (and given us)< some information. 608 In her promotion of the existence of animal humour, Jessica attends to these relevant others. We return to part of Extract 4.1

563 Jessica: I mean scientists are always very stuffy 564 about the fact 565 that you shouldn’t try and put 566 human feelings 567 [ and human emotions onto animals

She portrays them as dispositional , ‘stuffy’ (line 563). Dispositional name-calling can be a device for undermining the claims of others. Gilbert and Mulkay (1984) show how scientists use error-accounting, one of the features of the contingent repertoire, to counteract an inherent stumbling block to the self-maintenance of the formal empiricist repertoire, the stumbling block being the conclusion that everyone’s views must be equally valid if achieved through objective measures. The rival scientists are, therefore, constructed in dispositional terms - biased, insane, preoccupied - to explain away their arrival at ‘erroneous’ conclusions.
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Jessica’s brief is also to appeal to cosmopolitan tastes. Her appearance is on a programme in a ‘peak viewing’ slot, not a specialist programme out of popular hours. In her story she has to juggle being an expert with being just a general somebody, engaging in common-sense knowledge. Clive intimates, at the end of the programme, that she has achieved general somewbodyness:

Extract 4.4 (Source AS/CA end)

609 Well thank you for very much for joining us
610 Jessica Holmes
611 * * * * * *
612 and Tet the dog
613 thank you [ very much.

She no longer has her doctorate; no mention is made of her zoologist status and her dog has changed from ‘Gayston Amia:no AIte:ro’ (line 10) to ‘Tet’. Tet also has gained common-or-garden dog status, as opposed to an élite status removed from ordinary dogs. This éliteness is perhaps alluded to in the problematic status of the dog in the following line, occurring earlier in the data.

Extract 4.5 (Source AS/CA beg)

15 What sort of breed is this err dog?

If we have a further look at lines 565 to 567 from Extract 4.1:-

565 that you shouldn’t try and put
566 human feelings
567 [ and human emotions onto animals

we can see another populist move with the word ‘put’ (line 565), a constructionist term. Scientists do not put characteristics and properties onto objects; they extract them. They discover aspects of the real world. Constructionism is a sport for laymen.

In another chapter we shall be examining how Jessica legitimates her experiential claim but at present we can say that she has the conversational space for a lengthy
story and the status to invoke an ‘I’ claim. As we shall later discover, ‘I’ claims are
often vulnerable to dismembering. However, they can lessen accountability for
knowledge claims made. In connection with an interview with a snuff advocate on
BBC radio, Pomerantz (1984a) writes:-

“People who are interviewed by the media generally know that they may be
taken to task for what they say. Publicly making claims that cannot be
substantiated may be consequential and/or costly. In telling his personal
experience, the advocate subtly suggested that snuff cures hay-fever; however
he never made that claim and hence was not strictly accountable. The caution
with which he spoke seemed responsive to the circumstance of possibly being
held responsible for making any claims that he could not substantiate.” (p. 617)

Although I would not like to emphasize this point too far, as a lessening of the
speaker’s accountability for knowledge claims made is not always evidenced (see
Introduction), Jessica too stresses that it is only her opinion, her story. We return again
to Extract 4.1

Jessica:  
.hhh I think animals have
a sense of humour
but I could be accused of being
desperately anthropomorphic
for [ saying so

Her populist stance, her disparagement of scientists, her expertise etc. bestow on her,
however, a strong defence against accusations of engaging in errant stray opinions.
Also, as we shall see when we discuss legitimation, she constructs the story to ensure it
is not portrayed thus, as an errant stray opinion. Showing an awareness of
anthropomorphism also implies that at least she is not an ignorant victim of it. Billig
(1987) yields us insight into how all discursive presentations attend to the possibility of
counter-argumentation in their construction and so all speech revolves around
argumentation. We could add that all speech also attends to the threat of argument and
speakers protect their current constructed identity. The claims and the identity are
often of course mutually supportive. Here Jessica can be seen to be striving to do both
of these - protect her knowledge claim that animals have a sense of humour and protect
her scientific identity from any professional comeback. She has to attend to the micro
issues of being the expert in the situation, being populist, etc., but she also has to attend to the macro issues beyond the situation in the scientific community at large. An ‘I’ experiential claim, coupled with the contrastive stress on ‘I’ (line 557), divorces Jessica the person from Jessica the scientist and thus resolves the dilemma, but, as we shall see when we come to legitimation, Jessica’s expertise has to be retained to authoritate the claim. Rosen (1985) states:

“The story eludes the centripetal tug by being double-voiced.”  

He is concurring with Bakhtin’s (1981) idea that we are affected by centripetal forces within society and often speak with the voices of others. This is viewed as a controlling influence and one that should be resisted. Certain genres assist us to attain centrifugal speech, full of our own original ideas, and the narrative is one such genre. As a conversation analyst, I would, of course, view all speech as originating culturally, but Bakhtin has had an influence on some discourse research (e.g. in the educational sphere, Maybin, 1991 and 1992). Barthes (1973, 1977 on self-expression), a linguist and cultural analyst following in the wake of de Saussure (1960, originally 1916), viewed the narrative as liberating us from the Marxist sense of structures, as do many narratologists or narrative psychologists. For excellent discussions on this quite complex topic, together with insights into alternative studies of narrative structures and schemas, see Antaki (1994, Chapter 6) and Edwards (1997, Chapter 10).

If we accept Bakhtin’s premise as a resource rather than a reality, we can see that, with the help of this genre, the narrative, Jessica’s formulation of herself as a general somebody engaging in ordinary scripted activities (see Edwards, 1994b and 1995a) like watching television presenters and laughing at the humorous behaviour of elephants, within the framework that Clive has erected for her of a zoological expert, can double-warrant her claims. Identity and role (see Halkowski, 1990) can thus, in my research, be regarded as interactional devices brought into contextual play.

We have discussed Jessica’s accountabilities for expertise, controversy and cosmopolitanism, but she also has accountabilities for entertainment and self-presentation. Rosen (1985, p. 8) exposites on the alluring nature of autobiographical oral narratives and remarks on the construction of selves thereby:

“... all utterances in day-to-day conversation, however generated, however self-protective, however deceitful, however self-censored, constitute, as Goffman (1981) showed, a presentation of the self, but they are also a contribution to that never-finished business, the construction of a socially-constituted self.”
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There is reflected a reality of selfhood in this quotation and it hints of personal construct theory, the person-as-scientist as advocated by Kelly (1955), constructing his/her person over time by modification, but Jessica is no doubt attending to her responsibilities to entertain, to amuse and to satisfy the viewers’ thirst for snippets of information about her life, in order for the viewers to use them as jigsaw pieces to construct ‘Jessica the person’ or ‘Jessica the scientist’ or both. I am not insinuating there is a real ‘thirst’ out there, just an orientation towards it by Jessica.

We shall be returning to Jessica’s story in Chapter 7, but, before we move on to two other ‘I’ experiential claims, let us examine two which receive subsequent rhetorical back-up or are withheld because of potential rhetorical failure. The first one is from Appendix TSI.

b) *Rainbow circularity*

The discussion between the four children and the teacher involves the senses and has now encompassed the notion of touching a rainbow. Lena is pondering over whether it is possible to climb up rainbows and with a (to us, versed in scientific discourse) curious preoccupation with the ‘up’ is now displaying a realization of their circularity (thus, after an initial ascent, you would descend, if you tried to scale it).

Extract 4.6 (Source AS/TSI)

545 Lena: circle in the hh (. ) sky
546 ‘cos (. ) if you go over a rainbow
547 in an airplane
548 and you look down
549 you can see it (.2)
550 but (at the bottom of it it’s ground)
551 Teacher: Have you done that?
552 Lena: No but my dad has
553 and I’ve got a book (.)
554 and it says (. ) about rainbows
555 >and you can see the circle with an aeroplane
556 going on top of it.<
557 Teacher: [ ↑O↓h.
558 Lena: [ You can see it.
It’s called ‘All About The \( \text{Earth} \).’

Despite a direct request from the teacher for an ‘I’ story (line 551):

Teacher: Have you done that?

Lena avoids a direct ‘I’ claim, even though her story is still a personal experience story. Instead she appeals to authority outside of the present set of members - her dad, her mum, the author of the book. The construction of the reality of the book and its photographs is painstakingly developed - the photographs are there for all to see; the book has a precise academic-sounding title (a serious book) and the history of Lena’s acquiring the book can also be accessed. Earlier in the data too she has shown reluctance to engage in an ‘I’ story:

Extract 4.7 (Source AS/TSI)

Lena is not constructing these knowledge claims (about the circularity of rainbows) from a position of constructed expertise, as Jessica was in our last example. Neither is she reinforcing knowledge which has been accepted by the other participants as common (although she is attempting her own construction of common knowledge.) Although Eva, not Lena, was the instigator of this idea of circularity, the teacher has voiced scepticism. This data, like the rest of the data in this subsection, springs from Appendix TS1. Eva is objecting to the feasibility of climbing up a rainbow and gives as an account for her objection, its circularity.
Extract 4.8 (Source AS/TS1)

532  Eva: [ No you can’t
533    because it’s actually [ a circle.
534  Lena: [ It’s a circle
535    yeh (.)
536    it’s a circle.
537  (Eva:) I think [ (it’s a circle)
538  Grant: [ ( ) (semicircle)
539  Teacher: [ (Um) Where’s the other part
540  of a circle then
541  you can’t see:?
542  (1.0)
543  Grant: It’s [ a semicircle
544  Andy: [ ( ) the grass=

and then comes Lena’s contribution, beginning with line 545 of Extract 4.6:-

545  Lena: circle in the .hh (.) sky

The inward breath and the pause display Lena’s awareness that the notion of circularity is entering difficult waters. As well as not being recognized as common knowledge, Lena’s claims are, moreover, not self-consistent with that session’s or previous sessions’ constructed knowledge claims. Also, in lines 545 to 550, Lena has constructed a general experiential claim with a universal ‘you’, person-independent and time-independent (see next chapter). To follow that with a person-dependent and time-dependent story would be to weaken her case and she displays her awareness of this. Lots of literature has emerged on this issue of power (e.g. Foucault, 1977b and 1980; Fairclough, 1989) but, if we move away from the notion of pre-existent individuals, we see that it is discourse contexts that make claims untenable, not any pre-existent notions of power. Lena’s rhetorical position is admittedly weak but it is not weak in a structuralist sense, e.g. because she is a pupil or because she possesses little discursive strength. The spadework for an ‘I’ claim from Lena on this issue has just not been adequately carried out in the preceding sequences of talk. In such a situation, other
experiences can be accumulated to gainsay ours. Our perception, the place, the time, the weather, can all be characterized as atypical, detracting from our knowledge claims which we want to universalize. ‘I’ experiential claims can be lost in the past. They are time- and person-specific. We have fiction to show us that people can deceive when it comes to stories. They can mislead us by not painting an exact picture. Bits can be omitted; other bits can be elaborated upon or the whole story fabricated. Even if the teller is constructed as an honest soul, memory can be flawed. Tellers of such narratives have to attend to such accusations and protect themselves accordingly. Potter (1996c) writes of fact discourse having: -

“...two rhetorical orientations: an offensive orientation concerned with undermining alternative descriptions and a defensive orientation concerned with resisting discounting.” (Introduction, p. 15)

Let us briefly survey another ‘I’ experiential claim, which is substantiated by a subsequent turn, before approaching two ventures which stand alone. The example of the former this time is taken from Candela’s data.

c) Burning oil

Extract 4.9 (Source Extract 2.16)

210 Jorge: Can oil burn with no paper?
211 if I put oil on a soda top, does it light?
212 BI: I say it doesn’t, because I’ve done it, and it doesn’t light.
213 132: If you set a lit match to it, it’ll light.
214 B2: The presentation of empirical evidence (lines 212 and 213) is not deemed by B2 sufficient to stand alone, despite the verb ‘doesn’t’ in line 213, instead of ‘didn’t’, thus implying multiplicity of experiences. No indication is given of the whole context of the experience, e.g. the time, the place, with whom. The bare bones of this offering with the ‘I’ construction (‘I’ can have more varying degrees of construction in some other languages, e.g. in Spanish and Italian, where the ‘I’ can often collapse into the verb; and indeed this data was originally in Spanish and so perhaps would have this collapsed version), the knowledge claim and the experiential claim occupying just twelve words, makes this statement considerable as a candidate for redemption. In addition, there is
the possibility that ‘I say it doesn’t’, with its unsubstantiated identity construction, could be received as a subscription towards argument rather than argumentation, quite inappropriate to the educational situation. The second boy strengthens the first boy’s assertion and redeems the situation with a suggestion of how this state of affairs (the non-lighting) could be changed. A general universalized experiential claim, still protected from attacks against the time, the place, and other specifics, but also protected from personal attacks. Candela points out how the two inputs are mutually consensual but omits to elaborate on the differing status of the two claims, as members’ concerns, in the discursive context.

My second example of a rhetorically ‘standing alone’ ‘I’ claim comes from my data stemming from the friction lessons. This particular extract is situated in the teacher’s introduction to the second lesson. The lesson involves the teacher and the whole class.

d) Skidding on ice

Extract 4.10 (Source AS/F3)

Teacher: * * * * * * *
91 I found out something about friction
92 this morning (.)
93 on my on my journey
94 in my car
95 (. 8)
96 I skidded on the ice (.)
97 about twice (.)
98 my wheels just skidded over the ice
99 because
100 as you said on Friday
101 ice doesn’t have very much friction (.)
102 but when I came to places
103 where the gritting lorry (. ) had been
104 ((Knock on door))
105 (1.2)
106 I didn’t slip
Edwards and Mercer (1987) devote a subsection to such explicit continuity sequences (pp. 82 to 86). The lesson subsequent to this introduction is also to be on friction and has to be linked from a curriculum point of view to Friday’s lesson, but also, in this period in educational history, has more status if linked to common knowledge in the outside world. The discursive space at the beginning of the lesson allows the teacher to develop quite a lengthy ‘I’ experiential claim. Again, the actual construction of the claim will be surveyed in the chapter on legitimation, but here I wish to focus on its invocation in the personal form.

Experiential claims, such as this one, could come under the banner of remembering and Edwards and Middleton (1986a, 1986b, 1987 and 1988) have undertaken research in this vein; a discursive rather than a cognitive approach to memory. Bruner (1986) depicted remembering as a discursive social act and Bartlett too (1932, p. 206) ponders upon how the needs of the present are met by selective remembering of the past. This quotation from Bartlett is reproduced in Edwards and Mercer (1987, p. 165)

“to go to that portion of the organized setting of past responses which is most relevant to the needs of the moment .... an organism has somehow to acquire the capacity to turn around upon its own ‘schemata’ and to construct them afresh.”

Memory, from this perspective, is viewed as important for present concerns. It is the construction of the memory which has to be focused upon. We move away from a concept of memory as being a ‘job lot’ which you transport from the past to the present, courtesy of certain brain mechanisms.

This teacher, of course, has to counteract any accusations of selectivity, because she is offering this as common knowledge, a replicable experience. Here are two examples of how she constructs ‘common knowledge’. First, in line 91, she portrays knowledge about friction as separate from humans, just waiting to be discovered. Secondly, in line 101, the proposition that ‘ice doesn’t have very much friction’ is constructed as coming from the findings-out of the pupils (attribution on line 100). She has to attend to criticisms of engineering events to suit her purposes.
Referring back to what we learnt about common knowledge construction in Chapter 3, we can see, with the lines 107 and 108, that there is to be no dispute, no argumentation, about the fact that she did not slip on places where the gritting lorry had been; it is embedded as a presupposition, as 'given' information (Edwards, 1997):

107 Why didn’t I slip on places
108 where the gritting lorry had been?

She has successfully recruited the children in this version of common knowledge, that cars do not slip on roads that have been gritted, and now only wants to know the reason why. That is the area of argumentation which she launches towards an open forum.

The astute reader will quickly realize that I could be accused of engaging in the same process. The knowledge conveyed in Chapter 3, with its explanations of argumentation, common knowledge, contextually consistent knowledge and knowledge constructed in the procedure of talk could be viewed as being impregnable. It could be argued that the only issue open to debate is whether this is a stereotypical example of the issues relayed there. This could also be argued to be achieved through procedure, e.g. the chapter formats. I am certainly constructing contextually consistent knowledge by trying to ensure that my thesis is self-consistent.

The force of the teacher’s narrative emanates from its sequential positioning at the beginning of the lesson. Like Jessica, she has discursive room to develop a convincing story. Traditional researchers might attribute this to her power but power is instantiated in these discursive moves, rather than being some kind of causal variable outside of them; for example, in lines 107 and 108, she displays her accountabilities to, e.g., the development of continuous, self-consistent curricular knowledge; to the creation of knowledge consistent with the world outside; to the installation of knowledge into pupils, etc. This space at the beginning of lessons for the teacher is a normative expectation and if other activities occupy it, e.g. pupil noise and fooling-around, the teacher can be expected to be irate. That the teacher expects this space, unless otherwise stated, can be witnessed in Appendix F2, lines 69 and 70. This is the beginning of the lesson proper, ‘procedural matters’ having monopolized the previous lesson-segment.
If, at a dinner party, I were to announce, “Right now. Put your knives and forks down”, I might be assigned as being uncivilized. In that context there would be no normative cultural expectation that I had any more right to the floor than anyone else and I would have no exceptional accountabilities to perform, other than to chat amicably to people near at hand. Of course, if I were the Master of Ceremonies, my right would be intrinsic, as would my accountabilities to inform and direct proceedings.

For further explanation of ethnomethodology see my chapter on Methodology, Chapter 2. Also, for breaching experiments of cultural norms, see Garfinkel, 1967, and Heritage, 1984.

The double-voice of Jessica’s narrative, which we saw in our first example of an ‘I’ claim, is also relevant here. To construct common knowledge, the teacher has to become a common-or-garden somebody in the experience, while at the same time maintaining her stance as the expert in the classroom situation.

My last invocation of an ‘I’ experiential claim comes from Appendix TS9, the lunch-time colloquium with the teacher and the four children about the senses. Here, in a lengthy excerpt, the group are discussing touching a snake.

e) Touching snakes

Extract 4.12 (Source AS/TS9)
I went round the side of my grandma’s house. She lives about halfway up a mountain and there was something attached to the hosepipe. We managed to take the snake skin.

Child: "Um...

Teacher: Do you have to be careful in Spain of snakes?

Eva: "Umm...

Teacher: "Well, they’re not. There isn’t many poisonous but you have to have a special care ‘cos of the scorpions.

Grant: We’re going to Spain in the summer holiday...

Someone(s): [whooping noise]

Eva: and ((still whooping noise))

and then a few days later we my mummy found another snake and this time it wasn’t a snake skin it was a snake about that long.

(1.0)
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1249 but it wouldn’t have died \( \text{from} \) dehydration.

1250 Teacher: \( \uparrow \text{Ah.} \)

1251 (1.0)

1252 dehy \( \uparrow \text{dra} \text{\textunderscore} \text{tion} \)

1253 Eva: \( \text{[ (Yeh-) (. )} \)

1254 and we took these home

1255 (.6)

1256 and my dad left them out

1257 on the doorstep

1258 and the next morning

1259 they were stinking.

1260 Teacher: \( \text{Ugh} \)

1261 (6)

1262 So

1263 (6)

1264 Can you smell a snake then?

1265 ((she laughs heartily))

1266 Someone(s): Yes

1267 Eva: We’ll yes if they’re (.)

1268 (teacher still laughing))

1269 st (.)

1270 Yes if they’re (.)

1271 [ if they’re dead

1272 (Grant:) \( \text{[ (dead animals)} \)

1273 Eva: and been l- left out

1274 on the doorstep

1275 over\( \uparrow \text{n\textunderscore} \text{ight} \)

1276 and

1277 Teacher: ((laughs))

In this data there is much ‘remembering’ going on and a lot of the use of this word, before Andy enters with his contribution (also an ‘I’ experiential claim) on line 1207. It is worth noting that he has been striving to insert this contribution since line 1187, over
20 lines, and is only successful at a fourth attempt. Eva, on the other hand, has the discursive space to develop an intricate story, as did Jessica and the teacher in our other examples. Antaki (1994) has this to say about what he describes as ‘traffic management’:-

“Sacks (1972, 1974) engaged theoretical attention by observing that the long stretch of a story .... managed to keep at bay something that everywhere else was rampant in conversation: rapid turn-taking.” (p. 107)

The management, typically a preface, a telling and a conclusion, all organized to ward off interruptions, is an integral part of the meaning of a story. We shall elaborate further on this in Chapter 7.

Andy’s input (lines 1207 to 1209) is here the preface to the story and, on lines 1261 to 1264, we can surmise that the teacher is affording Eva space to finish off her story.

1261 Teacher: Ugh
1262 (. 6)
1263 So
1264 (. 6)

In the end the teacher has to invite a general conclusion from the story.

1265 Can you smell a snake then?
1266 ((she laughs heartily))

Eva does not concur with this request. She is at pains to maintain the specificity of her story, not generalize it, and she avoids a reductionist onslaught on her story. At the same time she does not express overt disagreement.

1268 Eva: Well yes if they’re (.)
1269 ((teacher still laughing))
1270 st (.)
1271 Yes if they’re (.)
1272 [ if they’re dead
Grant attempts to create an alternative generalization about deadness, as opposed to snakiness, but Eva pushes onwards with her detailed specificity. After all, the knowledge claim initially was about touching snakes, rather than smelling them, and her constructed expertise allows her to veer away from limiting her story to a warrant for just one area of knowledge. Both these children have a license to proffer alternative versions in this situation. Argumentation is the order of the day and there is a reduced preference for agreement.

Like Jessica and the teacher in our two other examples, Eva manages her identity in this exposition. The talk constructs her as the expert on snakes and Spain and this, in turn, protects her from counter-versions.

Eva recruits her family (nana, mum and dad) into the story to attend to likely accusations that this is an experience peculiar to her, even that she is imagining it all. However, she can only make the story common-knowledge in the context of Spain, not Britain, as that would destroy her expertise. Pupils often have accountability for submitting specific unusual experiences, whereas teachers are often accountable for linking commonplace experiences with the classroom work.

The question of consistency within the story, which we have seen as an important aspect of knowledge constructed as intra-contextual, is also crucial for Eva to legitimate the facticity of the story. More on this question of triangulation in Chapters 7 and 8. She might not, however, be able to create consistency between her story and any other item of curricular knowledge, because this again might serve to debase her expertise.

Eva creates scorpions for the knowledge-in-the-flow-of-talk’s requirement of creating something dangerous (line 1234). Snakes cannot be constructed as poisonous because her construction of her closeness to snakes would then be questionable.

Let us now move away from ‘I’ claims towards another type of experiential claim - ‘he/she/they’ claims. These are still claims happening to specific people but gain
strength from recruiting people outside of the situation if, at that point in the discourse, the speaker’s rhetorical position is shaky.

‘He/She/They’ Experiential Claims

We have already encountered some such claims in the data concerning rainbow circularity (Appendix TS1). We shall join the discussion at the point where Lena has uttered her generalized claim that, viewed from on top, a rainbow’s circularity can plainly be perceived by a person in an aeroplane. We, of course, realize that scientists have an alternative version to Lena’s; that a rainbow is not an object as such, but a perceived product of reflected light, so movement around it, as around a substantial three-dimensional object, would be impossible.

a) Rainbow circularity

Extract 4.13 (Source AS/TS1)

551 Teacher: Have you done that?
552 Lena: No but my dad has
553 and I’ve got a book (.)
554 and it says (. ) about rainbows
555 >and you can see the circle with an aeroplane
556 going on top of it.<
557 Teacher: [↑O↓h
558 Lena: [ You can see it.
559 It’s called “All About The ↑Ea↓rth”.
560 Teacher: [↑Aah
561 Eva: [ (  )
562 Lena: My mum brought it.

The scientists would, of course, dispute the warrant from the photograph in the book by asserting that this was essentially a ground-camera view, not a photograph from the aeroplane, but nonetheless the book still props up Lena’s argument about circularity.

Let us, however, turn our attention to the issue that this subsection is mainly about and that is warrants from specific external others. We have noted previously in
this chapter how Lena evades an autobiographical experiential claim because her constructed power at that stage and the power of her claim is weak. Hence line 552:-

552 Lena: No but my dad has

She has nothing to add about what her dad had made of this experience and whether his conclusions concurred with hers. We are no doubt meant to assume that dad was a source of her knowledge. Dad’s experiences are not so easy for the teacher to undermine as Lena’s and, as Dad is not a party to the present discussion, he cannot be challenged directly. However, Dad is a single person and may have only flown over a rainbow on a single occasion. Lena wards off potential cross-questioning by triangulating her assertions and her dad’s experience with evidence from a relevant book (Sechrest, 1967, explains triangulation in traditional social scientific research and Hammersley, 1979, explains triangulation in ethnographic research). Her mother’s experience with this book adds credibility to its existence.

In this context of argumentation, turn-taking is evenly distributed. Lena has to attend to possible criticisms with far more avidity than if she had been afforded the floor procedurally. As we have seen, her task would have been easier if she had constructed expertise on her side. Also prior common knowledge or contextually consistent knowledge constructions in concurrence with her knowledge claims would have endowed Lena with triangulation strongholds already in place.

Of course, other people’s experience can be passed on to us in the discourse construction. In line 552

552 Lena: No but my dad has

the dad is only directly associated with the experience, not with any relaying of information. Later, in Appendix TS2, another dad appears, this time Eva’s dad. Eva, at this point, is still endeavouring to come to grips with what a rainbow is:-

b) The essence of a rainbow

Extract 4.14 (Source AS/TS2)
Eva: [I thought it was the same as waves being separated into all the real colours by the waves (1.6) (That’s) what my (dad) says anyway.

Teacher: That’s what your book says?

Eva: Umm

(1.4)

Again, Eva’s cognitive processes, her dad’s affirmations and the contents of her book all acknowledge the same conclusion, that wave movement separates out the colours of the rainbow. The second part of the three-part warranting follows a 1.6 second pause (line 641) and the teacher supplies a third part after a 1.4 second pause (line 643), by doing a mishearing, subverting one of her social actions (see Sacks, 1992, Vol. I), a procedure discussed in a few paragraphs’ time. The process of repair is discussed in Schegloff et al., 1977.

The emphasis on ‘my’ (line 642) shows that the children are almost being superceded by their dads in this argumentation context. The children’s own identities are not deemed status-worthy enough to uphold their thinking and assertions. For these children, and in this context, the invocation of ‘dad’ is not just any third person. It’s a figure of authority, like the teacher herself, and also it’s a role in the child’s life that the teacher may not wish to contradict. Eva does not mention her dad’s experience directly, just his beliefs:

(That’s) what my (dad) says anyway.

With Lena’s ‘No but my dad has’ (line 552) we have no insight into his beliefs and inferences gained from his experience. The difference originates from the questions to which these inputs are responding. With Eva the question is:-
Teacher: What do you think about that?

With Lena the question is:-

Teacher: Have you done that?

Eva does not try and supply us with the thinking processes of her dad. Instead she shows us his behaviour; what he says. This constructs her part in the interaction and thus formulates the source or basis of her knowledge (see Pomerantz, 1984a). It's an orientation that just being her dad is enough of a warrant without having to justify his claims to knowledge. You may remember my criticism, raised in Chapter 2, of discourse analytical research, that repertoire analysis fails adequately to attend to interactional concerns. If we inspect the data more closely, the constructed realities are often shown to index the teller through his/her constructed experiences. Therefore, the teller is often eager to guard against conveying the impression that, for example, culture discourse about ethnic minorities (Wetherell and Potter, 1992) is ever-present with him. He is eager to correlate it to his experiences and thus create it as a reality. When we bind talk into 'discourses', we tend to lose sight of interactional concerns, both present and constructed, even if Wetherell and Potter would argue, and rightly so, that the 'repertoire' notion, placing 'repertoires' within stretches of talk, is a less monolithic idea than the 'discourse' notion adhered to by the followers of Foucault.

Here it is not a question of affected emotions and ideologies, but of affected intellect and knowledge brought about by the display of the interaction (see the discussion in Chapter 6 on Wooffitt's, 1992, research into the display of dialogue).

You may consider these sorts of appeals to significant others are peculiar to children, especially if you have been influenced by all the research on child development, done in recent decades (see Chapter 1). Before I present you with two more such warrants issuing from children, let me convince you that these rhetorical ploys are utilized by us all, regardless of age. This excerpt comes from Appendix CA4 and involves Clive (Anderson) and Jim, a goldfish owner, who has brought his goldfish along to be tested, after asserting that it has a significant memory.
c) Goldfish memory

Extract 4.15 (Source AS/CA4)

Clive: * * * * * *
314 now does does this goldfish
315 remember you
316 when you (.) it comes to feeding?
317 Jim: Err the kids tell me
318 that it recognizes me:

Like Eva's 'saying' in relation to her dad, Jim uses 'telling' (line 317). The kids' experiences, which lead to this conclusion, are not related. Jim is constructing for us an interaction which has influenced his knowledge. Jim avoids a direct assertion about goldfish's memory because, prior to a construction being placed on the forthcoming experiment, he treads with discursive care, in this argumentation context, on an issue about which there is controversy. The 'Err' (line 317) displays this care.

We culturally assume 'the kids' (line 317) are his kids. Sacks (1992, Vol. 1), in discussing category-bound activities in connection with the sentences 'The baby cried. The mommy picked it up.' (pp. 236 to 266), shows us how we use seers' and hearers' maxims and assume that the terms 'baby' and 'mommy' are linked in a relationship. Sacks uses the term 'subversion' to explain how social actions can be carried out with regard to their visibility as such. Sacks (1992, Vol. 1) uses the term 'observables' (p. 119). He tells the story of Raymond emerging from the bathroom with toothpaste around his mouth (p. 120) and thus convincing his parents he had brushed his teeth. He also mentions that, if a depressed person kills him/herself, suicide will be suspected. I am forever warning my teenage sons that, what they might construct as an attack on them by youths, passers-by might construct as tomfoolery among sub-cultural co-members. I do not want to proclaim that there is a reality/pretence dichotomy here, just two versions, one more culturally acceptable than the other. However, Jim is almost doing the opposite here. He is making the cultural norm less visible. Why, the reader might say, does Jim not use the term 'my kids'? The reason is fairly obvious. As well as conjuring up paucity of numbers to uphold his claim, 'my kids' would suggest ideas that the kids were biased, bribed, or had some other ulterior motive in their assertions. Although with 'the kids' we assume the relational ties, the whole accompanying
entourage of such a relationship is lessened. Why not, the reader might pursue, ‘the children’? I shall make two conjectures at the reason, which may be alternative interpretations but, on the other hand, may be being constructed at one and the same time. Number one, if the experiment turns out to be a failure, ‘the kids’ are more dismissable than ‘the children’. Number two, just as adults can be invoked for their authority, so ‘kids’ can be invoked for their naïve innocence.

There is a danger of the reader’s construing that my analysis revolves around the psychological motivations of the participants and psychological self-defence. It is important to stress that it is within the discursive interaction that these things are made relevant by participants’ attendance to them. They are not prior psychological realities. Edwards (1997) has this to say on this subject:-

“It is not that social actions are thought to be produced by some prior motive or intention, such as saving face or trying to influence, but that recognizability is a constitutive feature of how social action works, and participants do things with it.” (p. 99; emphases in original)

I could also be accused of moving away from actual experiential claims by concentrating, in the last two examples, on ‘what dad says’ and ‘what the kids tell me’, in other words on the interpretation of their own experiences by significant others. However, as I have already attempted to point out, the omission of the experiential claim and a move directly to interpretation often places more emphasis on interactional concerns. They cannot be divorced from experience in the analysis, even if it is that divorce which creates the effectiveness of the construction. The omission of the experiential claim plays an important part in the analysis, because, with the accompanying strong relational ties and without the constructed reality of experience, the contribution is often less vulnerable to deconstruction. (This depends on the context of course and in Chapter 7 on legitimation we shall explore contexts where the reality is strongly constructed to decrease vulnerability.) I have already pointed out that, in discourse, experiential claims are not the tightly bound area I portray them as being. I encapsulate them thus to write my thesis. The importance of their omission is often also a fruitful area of discussion. Thus we get a merging of experiential, cognitive (as in our next example), behavioural and other concerns quite uncharacteristic of their artificial separation in the traditional social sciences.

My second adult referral to a third party also involves experiential interpretations. The examples after this will return to direct experiential claims. This
extract is taken from Appendix CA5, where Jessica, the zoologist in the Clive Anderson programme, is addressing the subject of animals’ tails.

d) The use of animals’ tails
Extract 4.16 (Source AS/CA5)

508 Jessica: or sex (.)
509 Tails are good for sex (.)
510 err
511 Clive: so I’ve heard
512 Audience: ((laughter))
513 Jessica: if you’re
514 ((she laughs))
515 if you’re a peacock
516 and you spread that amazing tail out>
517 and the hens stand in front of you
518 and they watch you very carefully
519 what they’re actually doing (.)
520 scientists think (.)
521 is is assessing
522 how many of those wonderful eye spots
523 you’ve got on your tail feather (.)

The line I wish to focus upon is line 520

520 scientists think (.)

Again, we are not party to the experiences of the scientists which lead them to these conclusions but their experiments, their observations, their professional reading, etc. do all come as a cultural part-and-parcel of the term ‘scientists’. We would not be so impressed if Jessica said, for instance, ‘bus drivers think’, even if we could construct a scenario where a bus driver came into contact with more peacocks than a laboratory-bound scientist. We also assume that the scientists are those specific scientists whose work leads them to study peacocks (similar to our assumptions about ‘the kids’
discussed earlier). If the scientists were classed as nuclear physicists their assertions about peacocks could easily be discounted.

Why does Jessica pronounce ‘scientists think’, instead of ‘scientists say’ or ‘scientists tell me’ in line with the last two examples? A conjecture might be that scientists are a publicly available category of people, unlike the relational categories appealed to in our other examples. Their ‘saying’ is for public consumption, unlike their ‘thinking’ which is only accessible for the élite few, e.g. fellow scientists such as Jessica (see Wowk, 1984; Edwards, 1991 and Sacks, 1992, Vol. 1, for insights into the interactional work categories do). So again we have an implication of the transmission of knowledge between the significant other(s) and the teller. Jessica needs rhetorical back-up at this stage in the proceedings, as, in the preceding interactions, her constructed expertise has been whittled away by Clive for the benefit of programme management.

My penultimate ‘he/she/they’ experiential claim takes us back to children, to relational ties and this time a direct experiential claim. We have already seen how relational categories, e.g. dad, mum, etc., can suggest the private transmission of knowledge to the teller.

e) The soft/hard glass scenario

This data comes from MP1 - one of the lunch-time discussions between the teacher and four children about material properties. We have met it before in a larger context near the beginning of Chapter 3.

Extract 4.17 (Source AS/MP1)

588 Teacher: [ >Have< you been
589
590 Andy: [ Yeh
591 Grant: [ (No-)
592 Eva: [ ( ) My [ mum ha:s
593 Teacher: [ and s seen
594 the molten glass?
595 Eva: My mum ha:s and she (.) [ this man
596 Grant: [ I know
597 what it looks [ (like)
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598 Eva: [ he got ] he he
599 Andy: [ I bought ]

600 some glass moulds
601 Eva: they made this < lovely um glass jar
602 or something
603 and he just picked it up >
604 whether there was a bubble in it
605 or something
606 but he just went (.)
607 zhoom [ ( )

We have already seen how the children in this data involving glass encroach on the knowledge territory and monopolize the ground with their construction that glass is hard. This is the first step in that advancement. We shall meet some more of these contributions to that construction in our next chapter.

Eva puts forward her subscription towards a concept of hard glass in a context of argumentation and fairly strong opposition. The teacher is attempting a foray into common knowledge (lines 588, 589 and 593, 594) and Grant (lines 596 and 597) and Andy (lines 599 and 600) are currently being co-opted into this version of knowledge. Eva has an abortive attempt on line 592 to commence her story, the teacher pressing for an ‘I’ experiential claim (lines 593 and 594) which Grant and Andy only succeed in inadequately furnishing.

The interactional transmission of knowledge is implicit in Eva’s use of the term ‘mum’ (and ‘mum’ is a reliable source of knowledge and truthfulness about experiences, as was ‘dad’ in Extracts 4.13 and 4.14), so here Eva concentrates on fact formation. She protects her version from attack (Billig, 1987) by presenting her knowledge claim as just a story, not the transmitter of a message about knowledge. The knowledge claims have become camouflaged and submerged by experiential claims at this point in the data but, if we foreground the sequence before this, we can see that knowledge claims are topicalized.
Some interesting points from this section bear on our discussion of what followed. The teacher’s question (lines 578 and 579) conjures up procedural knowledge. Glass is meant to be either soft or hard, the children are given that choice. Lena, with her

and Grant, with his

try to introduce a varying quality to its essence. Eva, however, sticks with the initial either/or assumption.

and we see her later experiential claim in the light of this. Procedural knowledge has won the day at this stage. Also specific knowledge rejoices over common knowledge.

We must beware of treating the teacher as ‘fishing’ for an answer involving both hard and soft glass, as Pomerantz (1978a) would perhaps advocate that we do. This
would invoke motivation and would not be a true ethnomethodological stance. This would also be true of Mehan’s (1986) ‘known-information’ questions. The consistency of the knowledge produced can be cross-checked but we cannot penetrate teachers’ non-discursive psychologies.

So Eva presents her claim as just a story and not even her story, her mother’s story. So not only is her version defended, her person is protected from the counter-attack of argument. Nevertheless, she wants to be convincing. We shall see how she juggles all these issues in Chapter 7.

My last ‘he/she/they’ experiential claim comes from the lunch-time discussion between four children and the teacher about the senses. This time the discussion is about tasting snakes.

e) *Tasting snakes*

Extract 4.19 (Source AS/TSIO)

```
1315 Teacher: Can you taste a snake?
1316 Lena: YES
1317 [ (.8) you can (.6) You >can< eat it.]
1318 Andy: [ Ye:h (.4)
1319 my dad’s done it
1320 ( )
1321 Teacher: Can- you?
1322 Lena: I don’t know-
1323 I wouldn’t want to
1324 but you can.
1325 Andy: ((mutters during this.))
1326 Andy: ( ) you can.
1327 Lena: ’cos there was on this film
1328 and somebody said (.4) um
1329 “I’m hungry”
1330 and they saw this snake’s liver
1331 and ate them
1332 and (. ) they picked it up
1333 and stabbed it
```
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Lena: [ \text{this man and a girl}\text{um} (. ) \text{boyfriend and girlfriend}]

Andy: ( [ ] )

Grant: 'I hope it wasn’t poisonous ( . )

Lena: [ \text{it wasn’t poisonous}\text{it wasn’t poisonous}]

It was sort of (.2) turquoise (. )

due to the colour of turquoise.

Lena: \text{The first move the children make is to channel the discourse away from an ‘I’ experiential claim. The teacher asks about tasting a snake. You cannot decide from observing other people whether or not they can taste snakes but you can observe whether or not they can eat them. Eating is more amenable to ‘he/she/they’ experiential claims than tasting, the transmission of knowledge about which would have to be oral and consequently more vulnerable (unless an authoritative figure can be constructed, as in examples we have discussed). Therefore Lena makes the semantic move:-}

Lena: \text{YES [ (.8) you can (.6) You >can< eat it.}}

Thus, now ‘tasting’, in the context, has a new meaning. It is synonymous with eating. One major difference between the analysis upon which I am here engaged and a linguistic analysis is that linguists often imply that words or groups of words give meaning to contexts. Their model is of a one-way street without contra-flow. Perhaps a consequence of this approach is that the significant contexts of words are looked upon as fairly restrictive (see my brief mention of speech-act theory in the chapter on}
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Method, Chapter 2 and also in Chapter 5; also Levinson, 1983) Also meanings would always be worked out prospectively, not retrospectively. The trajectory of talk would not alter meanings already created. Lee (1987) promotes a slight shift on this position in his discussion of the word ‘just’, although this quotation of his is still packed with ontological realities, analysts’ categories, etc.

“Moore and Carling (1982) argue ..., for what they call the ‘principle of modulation’, where meaning is not precisely defined at the level of the word in many cases, but emerges from a complex interaction firstly between the linguistic elements in the utterance themselves, and secondly between these and the more general context of utterance including the speaker’s ‘knowledge base’, the contextual setting, and so on .... Examples can be found in which two (or even more) meanings combine, so that one type of meaning both overlays and shades into another. Borderline cases can be identified where it is difficult to decide to which category a particular case should be assigned.” (p. 395)

In line 1319, Andy takes up the opportunity to introduce a ‘he/she/they’ experiential claim and to refer to his dad’s relevant experience.

1319 my dad’s done it

As has already been discussed, constructed relational categories convey ideas of interaction and transmission of knowledge without the detailed construction of interpretations and interactional processes. The choice between the former and the latter is often determined by preceding discourse; here:-

1315 Teacher: Can you taste a snake?
1316 Lena: YE:S
1317 [ (.8) you can (.6) You >can< eat it.

However, also a determinant is whether you want to portray the significant other as being actively involved in the experience or as a passive bystander gaining knowledge by perception. There are pros and cons in each modus operandi. Andy could have stated, ‘my dad says you can’ with more emphasis on familial interaction and with overtures of a plurality of experiences, albeit potentially passive. However, with
certainly an arresting statement, Andy has a better direct inroad into a single story (which, in this case never materializes) to enhance facticity, relevancy, etc. through narrative fact organization (see Chapter 7).

Let us now look at another ‘he/she/they’ experiential claim in this excerpt. The ones we have investigated so far have been relational ones, even Jessica’s about the scientists. However, Lena’s ‘he/she/they’ experiential claim, in this context, gains its strength from being non-relational, as being independent of Lena and available to all. She jettisons an actively involved ‘I’ claim in lines 1322 to 1324.

Lena: I don’t know-
I wouldn’t want to
but you can.

She constructs her lack of volition as the reason for her lack of experience. She is attending to a counter-version for her lack of experience - the lack of potentiality.

Lena and Andy together construct this potentiality and, on line 1327, the way is open either for Andy to present a story about his dad or for the story which is generated, Lena’s story about snake-eating, publicly available through a film and thereby presented as common knowledge. Dad perhaps could be viewed as just boasting to his son, whereas Lena’s story gains strength from its objectivity and factual availability. Lena attends to potential accusations that she is just relaying children’s fiction by a number of means which will be discussed in Chapter 7.

However, we can say this here, that she leaves her own involvement with the film unexpressed.

Lena: ’cos there was on this film

Contrast this with the ‘I’ experiential claim of Jessica, already discussed, from Appendix CA6 - Extract 4.1
569 Jessica: but I once watched a television presenter

With the ‘I’ Jessica brings along constructs already formulated about being a zoologist and someone involved with the world of television.

Repeat of Extract 4.2 (Source AS/CA beg)

1 Clive: Let’s turn to some more serious question
2 about real animals
3 and I have with me (.)
4 Doctor Jessica Holmes
5 a zoologist
6 familiar to BBC radio and TV vewer.s.

This adds authority to the knowledge and interpretation constructs of the story. Lena’s message is different. This is common knowledge, available for all to know and interpret.

Each of these extracts consists of two stories. Sacks (1992, Vol.1, pp. 764 to 772) deliberates on first and second stories and comes to the conclusion that one of the stories serves the purpose of orientating to co-participants; in Lena’s case (watching the film) recruiting them into common knowledge, and, in Jessica’s case (watching the television presenter in a zoological framework) reminding co-participants of the authority behind the story and its interpretation. This could be likened to Goffman’s framing procedures (1981). I wonder if I myself present two stories when I preface a data utterance with such social-category appellations as teacher, mum, dad or even a gendered name.

We can see that we, as conversation analysts, must, of necessity, inject cultural assumptions into our analysis - normative expectations connotated by words, phrases or even situations, e.g. that films are publicly available. However, ideally, we should examine carefully the context in which these words, phrases, etc. arise and the uptake they occasion from participants in the talk.

How Lena achieves realistic credibility, as well as these identity constructions, will be addressed in Chapter 7; also the construction of the intriguing five lines (lines 1345 to 1349), about the snake’s not being poisonous, but turquoise, will be discussed.
**General Cogitations on the Personal Nature of these Claims**

In this chapter we are studying ‘I’ and ‘he/she/they’ experiential claims. We have seen that we, as analysts, cannot accept experiential claims as representations of actual occurrences which may afford insight into the truths behind proffered knowledge claims. Instead, we can view experiential claims from a neo-Kuhnian perspective. Kuhn (1962) depicts science as an activity bounded by precedent and tradition. Scientific contributions are modelled on past achievements. Exemplary achievements within the science of the time are classed as ‘paradigms’. Paradigms exhibit the important parameters to be measured, define the required standards of accuracy, display how observations are to be interpreted and the kinds of experimental methods acceptable.

My argument is that paradigms of acceptability are produced almost from moment to moment as the talk is generated. Experiential claims are often justifications for knowledge claims and often occur in talk in an ‘a posteriori’ position to the knowledge claims. However, the implication always prevails that experience has a fixed place in reality, an existence outside of the talk, and either precedes knowledge and thus constitutes new knowledge either for the individual or the society, or succeeds it and thus reinforces it. There are indeed times in talk when the experiential claim comes first and the knowledge claim second. Then the knowledge claim must be viewed by us, as discourse/conversation analysts, as primarily legitimating the experiential claim and not vice versa, although, once produced, they mutually support each other. There are also times in talk when the knowledge claim is not over-emphasized (e.g. all the hardness of glass stories from the children in Appendices M2 to M6 which have already been mentioned) and where consensus and the construction of the commonality and generalization of experience are more effective than the over-emphasis of the explicit knowledge claim.

What is constructed rhetorically depends crucially upon the ‘in situ’ state of production of the talk, aligned to Kuhn’s paradigm in the historical flow of scientific investigation. We have already seen experiential claims’ receiving added substantiation, e.g. Candela’s (1995) burning oil data:-

Repeat of Extract 4.9 (Source Extract 2.16)

210 Jorge: Can oil burn with no paper?
211 if I put oil on a soda top, does it light?
Drew (1991) in talking of asymmetries of knowledge, implies that there are category rights to knowledge. Consider the two following extracts which he presents and which demonstrate how the patient defers to the doctor’s right-to-know.

Extract 4.20 (Source Extract 2.5)

Pt: B’t this time I have a little problem.
(0.9)
Pt: I seem to have
(0.8)
((during which thumping sound, as though thumping hand on desk))
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Dr: nYe [:s.
Pt: [ what is it - contracted
     (0.4)
Dr: khn [ Ye:s.
Pt: [ tendon:
Dr: That’s right.

How long have you been in developing this?

Extract 4.21 (Source Extract 2.6 from Cicourel, 1983, p. 224)

Dr: What can I do for you?
Pt: Well, uh, I was concerned about,
    uh ... last summer, I guess, I
    - I was having a problem in the uh ... uh,
    I guess w-what you call
    the bulk of the outer uh part of the organ.
    There’s like paper thin uh cuts ...

While this is certainly partially the case and we have seen how, in my own data, Jessica,
in Appendix CA6, can confidently produce experiential and knowledge claims, in
relation to animals, from her constructed position as zoological expert and Eva, in
Appendix TS9, can do the same in relation to snakes and Spain from her constructed
role as snake experiencer and frequent traveller to Spain, I cannot but feel that there is
more to the equation than mere category entitlement per se. Work has to be done on
creating that category entitlement. We can imagine scenarios where the patient’s
knowledge would be warranted so much that it overrode the category entitlements of
the doctor. We must beware of entering a situation which would be akin to advocating
the ‘a priori’, rather than locally instantiated, reality of structural features, such as role
relations and power asymmetries, except perhaps re-labelling it all as category
entitlement. We must examine carefully how participants are reacting to situations and
certainly, in the two examples put forth by Drew, the patients are displaying deference
to the doctor’s knowledge but we do not know whether it is an upshot of his/her
category entitlement or some other attendant features of the situation which have
occurred in the prior discourse and are unavailable to us. These categories are analysts’
categories for Drew but are not convincingly shown to be participants’ categories. We could just as easily imagine a situation where the doctor would show the same sort of deference to a patient’s knowledge and then we could not easily ascribe it to category entitlement. We, as analysts, all use cultural assumptions in our analyses but we should, at least, either wait until the participants use the categories before ascribing category entitlement, or see how it is implicit in the structure of the discourse, e.g. the teacher’s procedural ‘space’ at the beginning of lessons (although, as we have seen, this is a normative entitlement, and often has to be campaigned for discursively. It does not occur automatically.) In my own examples we can see in the discourse the construction of Jessica and Eva as the experts but there is no such evidence in Drew’s tendered data. This deference to the doctor’s knowledge may indeed begin to construct the doctor’s expertise, but the doctor’s expertise is not, that we can see, pre-existent to that input. Until the term ‘doctor’ is used by participants (as the term ‘scientists’ was by Jessica in Extract 4.16), we should not begin to contemplate its category entitlement.

I do not want to infer that participants, in some sort of manipulative way, choose pronouns and relational noun categories to be rhetorically successful or to develop their stakes in the interaction. Sacks himself had great difficulty explaining conversation-generation to sceptics who contested that people could not think as fast as such a theory would imply! We must divorce ourselves from any ideas of mental or indeed biological choices. Edwards (1997: 107) states:—

“So the detailed contextual design and precision of talk is at least partially conceivable as an inescapable design feature of it, rather than something that has to be built in to it mentally for each utterance, under the control of intentions and plans (Suchman, 1987).”

There again, we must not misunderstand the word ‘inescapable’. ‘Inescapable’ refers to the general design feature rather than to the specific contributions. We must not view prior talk as determining absolutely what we now say. If that were true there would not be much conversational diversity. We have a range of cultural options to slot into the ongoing interweaving fabric of the discourse. The cultural options and general design features, although inescapable, are wide-ranging. The upshot of what we now say can be seen in the subsequent parchment of constructed meanings. However, we cannot look upon our choosing as the free individual right of choice. We fit into the discourse what seems to be one of the rhetorical ‘best fits’ in that context, produced by
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attendance to the multitude of contingent circumstances of the situation. Issues and criticisms are attended to and accountabilities addressed. This contribution may well have to be adjusted as the meaning further evolves over the next few turns and its own meaning may well change retrospectively but at the moment of production our contribution adds a further slant to prior constructed meanings. So our contribution is neither driven by free choice nor predetermined by external forces. This free will/external coercion dichotomy is so strong in our language and culture that describing the premises underlying discourse/conversation analysis is difficult to achieve within the confines of our language. Not that dichotomies and multichotomies are not useful, as resources for participants.

Let us return to the experiential agents - pronouns and nouns. They certainly create an asymmetry in the right-to-know and the right-to-experience between the participants and we shall come into contact with more of this in the following chapter. The knowledge context and the style for which we are accountable all have influence on our choice (if ‘choice’ is the correct word) of pronoun or noun and category selection (in Drew’s sense).

I would just like to end this subsection with two data extracts from Appendix MP8. They are chosen because they are very similar to each other except in their choice of experiential subject. These extracts are taken from pieces of written data from schoolchildren about material properties. I would contend that there is not much difference between spoken and written language. This, of course, is contrary to the opinions of many researchers, especially in education, whose contention it is that writing develops intellect and intelligence more than speech and is more mind-connected and reflexive about the language contained within itself. For example, Olson (1984) proposes that metalinguistic and metacognitive verbs are to be found in the written language and in homes where parents make a conscious effort to bring such language into their spoken arena. This reminds us of Bernstein (e.g. 1971, 1973, 1975 and 1990) and his middle-class ‘elaborated code’ in spoken language, also a concomitant feature of the development of adequate thinking processes (see Chapter I of this thesis). Emig too (1982), although she is eager to integrate the language arts, still affords writing a superordinate position. Writing turns brain into mind.

My assertion would be that speaking and writing are both discursive media (although words such as ‘tool’ and ‘medium’ suggest that there is something pre-existent to the discourse, e.g. mental ideas, and this is not an argument I would wish to
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promote) with perhaps different accountabilities and attendenda (things to be attended to). It might be argued that, because of the construction of writing as apart from the bodily person, that mind constructions may be more plentiful than in speech or that, because of the construction of writing as an occupation leaving a permanent, visual, symbolic legacy, rather than the fleeting transitory impression of speech, that there may be more constructions regarding the language itself therein. Culturally we know that a writer certainly does not have to worry about an immediate challenge from a co-participant. Writing distances participants. These aspects, however, are just part and parcel of the discursive context and certainly have nothing to tell us about children’s learning. They are not evidence for the advocation of any salient differences between speech and writing and certainly do not elevate writing over speech in supremacy.

Transcription symbols, of course, to express intonation, are not part of the rhetorical mantle of writing. The following are as presented except for re-alignment and contain the whole of the discursive/rhetorical message, whereas with speech, if the analyst dispenses with transcription, or transcribes inadequately, some of that message is lost.

Here now are the extracts:-

Extract 4.22 (Source AS/MP8)

B

1 stone is quite hard
2 though it’s not very hard
3 because my brothers only 5
4 and he can break a rock

Extract 4.23 (Source AS/MP8)

C

1 Is stone hard
2 I think some stone is hard
3 and some are soft
4 some stone is hard
5 because it is made of some kind of rock
6 some stones are soft
7 because I thwe a stone at a wall
8 and it Broke.
Personalized Experiential Claims: 1

The experiential subject in B is ‘my brother’ (line 3), a five-year-old, and in C is ‘I’ (line 7). Both writers are accountable to a situation where the teacher is demanding open-mindedness with the emanation of no firm dogmatic conclusions on this ‘hardness/softness of stone’ debate. In B the writer keeps ‘stone’ in the singular and so has to depict hardness and softness in the one entity. The five-year-old brother’s ability to break stones lends credence to the belief that stone is soft but the word ‘can’ (in line 4) leaves intact the implication that he does not always succeed and the word ‘rock’ in the same line sends out cultural messages of hardness. The term ‘my brother’ (line 3) sends out signals of relational and correspondence channels between the knower-cum-teller and experiencer, discussed already in ‘my dad’ and ‘my mum’ examples.

In C the writer forms two subcategories of stones, one hard, one soft. He/she leaves the hard stone in the singular (lines 2, 4 and 5) and puts the soft stones in the plural (lines 3 and 6). This sends out signals of size differentiation, especially as he/she aligns ‘hard stone’ with ‘rock’ (line 5), which is culturally assumed to be amassed. The ‘I’ experiential claim (lines 7 and 8) justifies one half of his/her earlier knowledge claims, ‘I’ being perhaps the best linker, all other things being equal, between knowledge and experience. He/she does not avail him/herself of an experiential claim in line 5 to justify his/her knowledge of the existence of hard stone for such a claim would have directly countered the experiential claim in line 7 and perhaps would then have looked like a poor piece of argumentation despite the sub-categories’ formulation. In speech, if challenged, he/she could have bolted down the already constructed escape route of different categories of stones. In writing, however, such potential problems have to be attended to more closely, as one does not always have comeback to criticism. Two god-like insights into the compositions of the two sorts of stone as in line 5 might have worked rhetorically better, as by that means we can do more differentiation work than we can by recounting experience, where the tying of different results of action with differing material compositions of the acted-upon object can so easily be deconstructed. The writer’s strategy is to mix the two approaches and it is interesting to see that, in his/her recounting of his experience with soft stone, the wall is there as a relic of his/her assertions about hard stone.

We can thus see how, in these interrelations between knowledge and experience, the identity of the experiencer is partially worked up.
**Conclusion**

This chapter has attempted to demonstrate that the choice of person-subject in experiential claims is appropriate to the knowledge context and the prior discourse. In this type of analysis it is not fruitful to search for any correspondence between person choice and any pre-existent 'reality'. If we apply the kind of analysis I am advocating, we discover that often the identity of the experiencer, and sometimes his/her relationship with the teller, are worked up in the telling and subtly linked to the knowledge creation.

In this chapter we have over-viewed 'I' and 'he/she/they' experiential claims and now, in like vein, we shall move on to 'we' and 'you' experiential claims.
CHAPTER FIVE
PERSONALIZED INVOCATION OF EXPERIENTIAL CLAIMS
WITHIN THE CONSTRUCTION OF KNOWLEDGE

2) ‘We’ and ‘You’ Experiential Claims

Before I embark on this second chapter on pronouns, the majority of which linguists would prefer to class as ‘pronominals’, as they often refer back to names rather than common nouns, I shall acknowledge the work of these selfsame linguists with regard, amongst other things, to the ‘social action’ feature of talk. This will necessarily be a gloss as it will be brief and I shall, in the main, construct as homogeneous the diverse work carried out in a number of linguistic fields, e.g. the work done by sociolinguists, anthropological linguists, grammarians and semanticists, as disciplinary groups, as well as individuals within those groups.

I would like here, perhaps arbitrarily, in order to display the ‘frame of reference’ of linguists, to pinpoint three traditions in linguistics this century. A much more extensive flavour of this ‘frame of reference’ can be gained from reading Mühlhäusler and Harré (1990) and Lyons (1977a and 1977b). I will look at the notions of a) discourse context, b) mobility of grammar structures, and c) cultural context, from a linguistic perspective, and then move on to, hopefully, clarify my own approach against this contrasting backdrop. These are not necessarily kept-separate traditions. One linguistic researcher could attend to all three in his/her approach to data.

Context versus grammar
This first subsection deals with a) the discourse context.

Austin (1962), in his speech-act theory, divided utterances into two distinct sets, constative and performative utterances. This conjured up the impression that context was outside of the talk (or text) and was something that language users could acknowledge or not, as the occasion demanded. This text/context divide is very prevalent in linguistic research. Although he, together with Searle (e.g. 1969), later modified this position and began to see all utterances as performative, having locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary forces (see Levinson, 1983), many linguists still look on some pronouns as abiding by the rules of deixis and others by anaphoric rules. According to linguists, indexical pronouns look outside the text to the
context of the utterance for their semantic meaning and others are anaphors which refer back to nouns and names within the text. These pronouns are specifiable. As I mentioned in the Introduction, ‘I’ is regarded as always indexical. Admittedly, there are quite a few linguists who would now totally want to abandon the idea of anaphors (Mühlhäusler and Harré, 1990 and Lyons, 1977a and 1977b, especially 1977b, show how the notion of anaphors is increasingly becoming discredited among linguists). The indexical pronouns are viewed as more likely to be engaging in performative work, acting on the context. Once an outside context has been established, it can be acted upon and changed by language, e.g. This is a woman.

I take this woman to be my lawful wedded wife.

Here context has an external reality and the interaction between it and the text can create meaning. The linguistic sub-discipline of Pragmatics has, as resources for its analyses, this combination of text and context, as explained by Schiffrin (1994, p.227):

"... it is this functionally based interdependency that helps to create the sequential regularities characteristic of discourse and that allows people to use both text and context as a resource by which to communicate with each other."

My analytic standpoint is very different from this. Although the terms ‘deixis’, ‘indexical’ and ‘context’ are likewise part of my analytic vocabulary, my perspective on these is at variance with the linguists. My notion of ‘context’ is more internal to talk itself, as my standpoint takes note of the reflexive properties of talk taught us by ethnomethodology. The talk constitutes the context (On a reflexive note, though, it is worth considering how the terms adopted by Conversation and Discourse Analysis, such as ‘situated talk’, ‘interaction between participants’, ‘performance’, ‘social action’, and the emphasis on context of utterance, imply the reality of a context external to the talk). My rejection of an external context, independent of talk, however, does not mean that the notion of anaphoric reference would be any more acceptable to me, as we shall see in the following subsections. Participants in talk-in-action attend to cultural accountabilities on micro and macro levels, rather than to the restrictions of grammatical ties.

**Pre-determination of Meanings**

This second subsection deals with b) the mobility of grammar structures.
Among some linguists, there is a sense that grammar pre-determines meaning and that generalized grammatical formats pre-exist their context of use, a diachronic and historic perspective on language contexts (a causal perspective developed in the nineteenth century to oppose Platonic thinking on universals), often found among poststructuralists too. There is implied a boundedness of grammatical structures (see the end of my Chapter 2 for a discussion on how we should beware of regarding discourses as bounded) and little to inform us on how these structures can be resisted and dismantled. In fact, there is little in this approach to show us how interaction is accomplished. Schiffrin (1994, p. 90) in a book, from which we have already had a quotation in this chapter, informing us of different approaches when analysing discourse, has this to say about the boundedness of speech act theory, which, especially in its early stages, was in this mode:

"... the knowledge that participants use in linguistic exchanges ... relatively static knowledge: knowledge of what constitutes an act, what type of act it is, and whether more than one act is involved in its realization is brought ‘ready made’ to each linguistic exchange.

...by focusing upon the meanings of utterances as acts, speech act theory offers an approach to discourse analysis in which what is said is chunked (or segmented) into units that have communicative functions that can be identified and labelled."

Grammatical forms are viewed as having built-in rhetorical effects. They are not viewed, as in my analysis in this chapter, as important devices to help us manage discursively and locally in talk, issues such as sameness and difference.

**Synchronic Structure**

This subsection deals with c) cultural context.

Saussure (1960; original in French, first published, 1916) developed a structuralist theory of language, which led some linguists to view language as a system of socially determined values. Saussure’s theory emphasized the arbitrary nature of the sign and the arbitrary nature of the signifier-signified combination (Culler, 1976). Saussure did not acknowledge any extra-linguistic context, such as was discussed in the first of these three subsections and, unlike the second subsection, his approach to language was synchronic and cultural, rather than diachronic and transferable between
cultures. Saussure stresses the relationship between language components in language systems unique to each culture.

Although I welcome Saussure’s emphasis on the synchronic, internal and cultural nature of language, his theory of language displays a partial legacy of the tradition referred to in the last subsection - the deterministic aspect. Here, in Saussure’s theory, culture and language are one and the same. People are depicted as arbitrarily locked within their cultures through perpetuation in language. Saussure does not take much account of social action in his theory. This view of language is similar to that proclaimed in the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (see, for example, Whorf, 1956; also Lyons, 1981, Sections 10.2 and 10.3) which proposes that one’s view of the world is in accordance with the language one uses to describe that world. In the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, not only do different ‘Cultures’, with a capital ‘C’, view the world differently, but people within differing professions (see the reference to Whorf’s gasoline drums [Edwards, 1994a] in Chapter 7 of this thesis).

Also, Saussure places great emphasis on culturally created structures. This encourages, once again, the search for textual referents to, say, pronouns. Once again we have a series of structural assumptions in place before we begin to study actual language in use - an etic study of language, rather than an emic one. I, myself, would prefer to hold the idea of reference in abeyance until it is displayed as relevant by participants.

Although conversation analysis, in its purest earliest state (see Psathas, 1995), can be very formalistic, my own analysis, throughout this thesis, is, hopefully, more driven by the participants’ moment-to-moment displays of sensitivity to culture both locally in the talk and on a more general discursive scale; their own accountability. Accountability to formalistic aspects, although sometimes pointed out in my thesis, is slightly subverted compared to the way it would be treated in the research of pure conversation analysts.

Conversation analysts are proud of the formalistic nature of their research. In a recent paper by Schegloff (1997), highlighting the shortcomings of embarking upon a critical analysis from the outset of a piece of research, conversation analysis is regarded as ‘formal analysis’ and there is much discussion of ‘structure’. At times, Schegloff gives the impression that form and structure are gateways to a deeper critical message, rather than the message being on the surface already. This paper is laudable in many respects and it is really only the terminology (inherited from linguists) with which I
would take issue. I would warn of making an ‘a priori’ god of structure, the pitfalls of which I shall, hopefully, demonstrate subsequently in this chapter. Most of the time I find myself agreeing wholeheartedly with Schegloff’s participant-orientated stance, as here, as I quote Schegloff, quoting Rosen (1994, p. 126), paraphrasing Goethe! (quite a lot of footing there!)

“To paraphrase Goethe’s grandiose warning to the scientist: do not look behind the notes, they themselves are the doctrine.”

Let me briefly provide an example of how a structural approach in conversation analysis can become an etic approach. Adjacency pairs have been much discussed in conversation analysis (e.g. Schegloff and Sacks, 1974) and how, for example, once a question is produced, the co-participant is accountable for an answer. If we have these ideas too engrained into our thinking, we might fail to recognize the accountability of some questions (as in Extract 3.7 in Chapter 3 of this thesis, reproduced from Sacks, 1992, Lecture 27, p. 450, Roger’s question ‘Are you just agreein’ because you want to uh’) or, perhaps, the accountability of the lack of a question. It is not only second-part utterances for the production of which participants can be accountable and we should not fall into the trap of building up our own rigid structural theories of adjacency pairs, etc., before we come to the data. We should not build too many overall theories at the expense of getting what we can from the present data. After all, participants will display for us their accountabilities for answering questions, etc.

Of course, conversation analysts, unlike many linguists, do not absolutely bar the production of any language structures. The former pronounce that, if, in these productions, structural norms are breached or, if expected structures are not produced, the speaker is accountable; then an account is culturally expected.

**An Alternative Approach**

I hope now to show, by an example of natural language in use, how the idea of a referent has no bearing on a participant’s orientation to a produced pronoun. When a so-called ‘referent’ is produced, it is misleading to view it as structurally imperative, or as a referent at all.

Take the following piece of data from the lunch-time discussion on the senses. Snake-tasting as a feasible possibility is being discussed. Hopefully, it will become clear, from this analysis, that the linguists’ preoccupation with form and structure
obscures moment-to-moment situated movements of social action. The idea of reference to former text or to outside context clouds our vision.

\(a\) Tasting snakes

Extract 5.1 (Source AS/TS10)

1327 Lena: 'cos there was on this film
1328 and somebody said (.4) um
1329 “I’m hungry”
1330 and they saw this snake’s liver
1331 and ate them
1332 and (. ) they picked it up
1333 and stabbed it
1334 and (. ) they cut it
1335 in lots of pieces
1336 and started eating it
1337 Child: [ ṭŪggh
1338 Lena: [ this man and a girl
1339 um (. )
1340 boyfriend and girlfriend

Lena presents her listeners with a scene from a film. On line 1327, Lena gives a pre-announcement that her story will concern itself with that which occurred on a film. On line 1328, one faceless, ungendered individual is introduced (‘somebody’) and, on line 1329, he/she refers to him/herself as ‘I’. Then, on line 1330, the action becomes pluralistic. The actors become ‘they’ and, on line 1331, the snake’s liver, referred to first on line 1330, becomes ‘them’, although it reverts to the singular on lines 1332, 1333, 1334 and 1336. The pluralistic actors’ ‘they’ occurs again on line 1332.

We do not need, in my analysis, to glance back in the text to see a relationship between the pronouns ‘they’, ‘them’, ‘it’, etc. and items within the preceding text, although it is admittedly the inferences of the preceding text which have produced them. There is no such item-based relationship to be found within the story so far and so the very terms ‘pronouns’ and ‘pronominals’ hamper the linguist in recognizing this. In my analysis, the terms ‘they’ and ‘them’ succeed in implying generality, where Lena
has been asked a general question about whether snake-tasting is a feasible proposition. The first-initiated 'somebody', on line 1328, could be taken to be an eccentric one-off individual, so that the shift to 'they' and 'them' is understandable as a kind of example-generalizing device. Beware, however, of viewing the shift to 'they', on line 1330, as a repair in the sense of correction. In conversation analytic terms, repair is not necessarily correcting a fault. It is about displaying a movement of position. Nofsinger (1991) directs our attention to this display aspect of repair (p. 132).

Lena has a tension here between, on the one hand, legitimating her experiential claim by portraying the received-through-a-film nature of her experience and, on the other hand, relaying that this could be a general occurrence. It is this tension which generates the mixture of singular and pluralistic pronouns.

The aspect of generality of occurrence is also portrayed by the demonstrative adjective 'this' on line 1327. Lena does not afford us the exact title of the film, because, at this stage, this would make the experience too specific. She also does not present the scene as part of a specific, larger story but as a self-contained watchable entity, valid and understandable on its own through our common-sense knowledge. We are ignorant as to who the 'somebody', on line 1328, is. 'They', too, are faceless people. They are severed from the wider specific story, which could have been viewed as outrageous fiction.

However, the snake's liver (line 1330) reverts from being 'them' (on line 1331) to 'it' (lines 1332, 1333, 1334 and 1336) and Lena here legitimates the experience by detailed description (see Chapter 7). This 'it' is acted upon - it is picked up (line 1332); it is stabbed (line 1333); it is cut up in lots of pieces (lines 1334 and 1335) and the process of eating it is begun (line 1336). This detailed description is more effective with 'it' rather than 'them'. Plurals are useful for generalizing. Singulars are used in narrating specific instances of those generalizations. It is all driven by rhetoric, rather than being referentially determined. The rhetorical effectiveness of all this can be seen in line 1337 with the child's reaction ‘TUýggh’.

Only retrospectively, on lines 1338 to 1340, does Lena supply us with, what linguists would call, the anaphors; in this case the people who were involved in the already presented scene.

1338 Lena: [ this man and a girl
1339 um (.)
At this sequential stage in the proceedings, Lena constructs the social relationships between the two characters (and, indeed, the numerical quantity of them) and, by so doing, helps to legitimate the credibility of this extraordinary experience (see Chapter 7). Generality-promotion has been abandoned for the moment.

It is clear, from this analysis, that the so-called ‘referents’, on lines 1338 to 1340, might not have occurred at all if the legitimating requirement for detail had not been deemed to need attention in the ‘in situ’ interaction.

Even conversation analysts may say, when inspecting this data, that Lena was attending, on lines 1338 to 1340, to accountability for referents. As you have already seen, in my analysis, lines 1338 to 1340 are provided as legitimation for the experience. Experiential legitimation will be discussed at length in Chapter 7.

**Back to ‘We’ and ‘You’ Experiential Claims**

We have seen from the previous section of this chapter that an approach which views talk as rhetorical and situated is more meaningful than one which ‘a priori’ pre-occupies itself with linguistic structures. Let me now display this rhetorical and situated nature of talk by returning to more of my own analyses. We have studied how ‘I’ and ‘he/she/they’ experiential claims can be used as devices to distance participants, knowledge being constructed asymmetrically as the possession of individual participants. We have also seen how these same pronouns can take on a consensualizing role in situations where knowledge is being aggregated, e.g. in the ‘hardness-of-glass’ narratives, Appendices MP2 to MP6, there is evidence of this aggregation.

Just as ‘I’ and ‘he/she/they’ claims can create consensus as well as conflict, ‘we’ and ‘you’, as well as performing as consensualizing pronouns, also have the potentiality for constructing asymmetry of knowledge and discord, as I hope to show.

Through these pronominal devices, together with other resources, sameness and difference are managed discursively and locally in talk.

These two sides of the interactional coin - distancing and consensualizing - are important to stress, because often discourse/conversation analysts are accused of promoting a consensual image of social life. Combating this image, Edwards (1995b) writes:-
“One of the charges sometimes levelled at Sacks and CA, by alternative approaches that treat language, discourse or texts as socially significant in some way, is that it is a form of political quietism, displaying a lack of concern for the wider, macro or political nexus of sociolinguistic relations. This can be argued in a number of ways. One is to focus on Sacks’ pervasive use of the term ‘member’, in expressions such as ‘members’ categories’; that it implies a consensus conception of social life. It does not.”

(Bruner, 1986) also attends to this potential criticism:

“In the end, it is the transaction of meaning by human beings .... that makes human culture - and by culture, I do not mean surface consensus.”

As I hope I have shown, people do engage in argument and argumentation. (Billig, 1987, shows us that argumentation, argument and rhetoric are ever-present in talk through talk’s attendance to alternative versions). People are not always agreeing with each other, even if the participants/members are discourse/conversation analysts! Although, in situations such as I am describing, Edwards and Mercer’s ‘common knowledge’ (1987) and Pollner’s ‘common reality’ (1987) are generally at issue, and participants orientate themselves towards them, they are not necessarily achieved. On the other hand, argument and argumentation may achieve a consensual end. Reality disjunctures and multiple perceptions do occur, but usually a reconciliation is attempted to achieve a unitary version of reality or knowledge.

Conversation/discourse analysts are also viewed as advocating a consensual view of society because, within such an analysis, ‘members’ are seen as attending to general, normatively-understood, cultural, conversational rules.

Another reason for this perspective on conversation/discourse analysts is as follows. Social scientists, removed from ethnomethodological interaction analysis, are loath to recognize the stances and positions portrayed in the content of their speech as ‘mere’ situated arguments, whereas conversation/discourse analysts embrace this suggestion. This affords the conversation/discourse analyst a ‘tolerance’ difficult to understand in other social science quarters. Other researchers cannot accept situated stances as ‘real’ positions and hence the concept of pervasive consensual interaction is born. In defence I again quote Bruner (1986):

“... it is not the case that a constructivist philosophy of mind (or of literary meaning) disarms one either ontologically or ethically. Interpretations, whether of text or world experience, can be judged for their rightness. Their rightness,
however, is not to be reckoned by correspondence to an aboriginal ‘real’ world ‘out there’. For such a ‘real world’ is not only indeterminate epistemologically but even empty as an act of faith.” (p. 158; emphasis in original)

I must not pretend, however, that Bruner was a relativist. He spoke from a standpoint where human intentions were paramount. Nevertheless, I do feel many a relativist would endorse this quotation.

As in the previous chapter, we shall still be looking at the construction of the identity of the experiencer in relation to the knowledge claim. For both ‘we’ and ‘you’ claims, we shall look at three different inferences of these pronouns. Here ‘we’ and ‘you’ are treated together but I hope their different rhetorical purposes will be made clear as the chapter progresses. As will be made clear, items one and two (below) are useful in the construction of consensual knowledge. Number three shows how these pronouns can be used as devices for division:-

1) The ‘we’ or ‘you’ (the generalized ‘you’), who encompass all mankind, the ‘we’ or ‘you’ who have insights into ‘common knowledge’, the whole of knowledge, accessed by experience and by just being alive.

2) The ‘we’ or ‘you’ who have access to the ritual or procedural knowledge of this context, accessed by e.g. being part of our educational system. By learning ‘you’ become ‘we’.

3) The ‘we’ and ‘you’ which separate. ‘We’ are not part of ‘you’ and ‘you’ are not part of ‘we’. Often categories are constructed to divide hierarchically, e.g. teachers and pupils; adults and children; travellers and stay-at-homes. Conflicting knowledge claims are here threatened and at stake.

It would be tempting to treat ‘we’ and ‘you’ as ‘doing consensus-making’ and ‘I’ and relational ‘he/she/they’ claims as ‘doing division’ but that is not the way Wittgenstein’s (1953) ‘language games’ work - for example, consensus between parties can be used to alienate another party and cut off its knowledge claims; also a series of ‘I’ claims can be an effective means of creating common knowledge by the assumed independent status of each claim (see the first series of data extracts in this chapter).

Sacks (1992, Vol. 1), as well as the collaborative ‘we’ (e.g. Lecture 3, pp. 144 to 149, delivered in the Fall of 1965) introduces us to the category-bound ‘we’ (e.g. Lecture 8, pp. 333 to 340, delivered in the Spring of 1966 and Lecture 11 on stereotypes, pp. 568 to 577 delivered in the Spring of 1967) which has the potentiality
to segmentalize and divide. Of course these are not always separate. Let us now look at some data.

**Bonding and Segregating - 'We-ness'**

* a) The soft/hard glass scenario

The 'hardness-of-glass' data (Appendices MP2 to MP6) already introduced in Chapter 3, shows how 'we-ness' is constructed from a number of separate 'I' experiential claims from the pupils. They consolidate their togetherness and, at the same time, oust the teacher's claim that soft glass is a viable option to consider. Positions are polarized and the idea that materials can have variable states is not readily entertained.

We are not linguists engaging on a linguistic analysis, so we must not suppose that 'we-ness' has to be explicitly expressed in claims. It can be inferred. Here, in the 'hardness-of-glass' data, the 'I' claims afford the 'we-ness' a particular strength. The claims seem independent and the criticism of collusion is thus avoided (see the discussion on 'K is Mentally Ill' by Smith, 1978, in the next chapter).

The 'hardness-of-glass' data extracts (Appendices MP2 to MP6) contain children's stories where smashing glass is highlighted and often emphasized:-

**Extract 5.2 (Source AS/MP2)**

| 644 | You could just- |
| 645 | o:h |
| 646 | get a chair probably |
| 647 | and jump up |
| | * * * * * * |
| 651 | [ and smash it |

**Extract 5.3 (Source AS/MP3)**

| 744 | and the window smashed |

**Extract 5.4 (Source AS/MP4)**

| 775 | hh and it smashed (.) |
| 776 | well it didn’t really smash |
it just (probably) smashed in the middle
and (and it didn't fall down)
and it's still smashed

Extract 5.5 (Source AS/MP5)

and we smashed the windscreen

Extract 5.6 (Source AS/MP6)

(what) <these> firemen had to come
and smash all the windows

and then he had to climb up
into the little bedroom window
and smash it

The action moves away from constructed potential action in Appendix MP2 to constructed actual action in the rest. We shall return to some of these extracts later in the thesis. For now, we shall emphasize the ‘we-ness’ these extracts create. However, in connection with the theme of this chapter, I will point out, in line 644 of Extract 5.2 (the constructed potential action) the generalized, non-contrastive ‘you’, which is used in constructing general patterns, scripts, universals, and actions as rational or expected.

b) The Return of the Psammead
As we shall discover in the next chapter, when we investigate social remembering, collaboration and ‘we-ness’, as well as by these separate stories, can be achieved by participants’ formatting the content closely and co-operatively. Here is part of an extract, given more fully in the next chapter. Lena is describing a television programme, ‘The Return of the Psammead’, to the teacher and three other pupils. The programme is a story wherein one girl is being rude and obnoxious and a pleasanter girl is, at this juncture, hiding under the table. A woman is serving the rude one dinner and
does not know of the existence of the second girl under the table (an exact look-alike).

Lena is in the midst of her tale:

Extract 5.7 (Source AS/TS3)

886 and (.) she got up
887 > and said “I’m not eating it”
888 and spit her tongue out < at the woman
889 and w (.)
890 and [ she said “Get upstairs”
891 and she did go upstairs
892 Andy: [ Yeh
893 (1.6)
894 and she did go upstairs
895 [ but then the other one (came out)
896 Lena: [ and then (.) she went upstairs (.)
897 and the other girl
898 that was under the table
899 > that nice one <
900 Andy: [ came out

Notice lots of collaborative utterance completions and joint story telling between Lena and Andy. As well as Sacks (1992, Vol. 1), Lerner (e.g. 1989) and Goodwin (e.g. 1979) discuss these collaborative utterance completions; also Edwards and Middleton (1986b), as we shall see in the next chapter. The action is accentuated - the going-upstairs is mentioned three times (lines 891, 894 and 896), the coming-out-from-under-the-table twice (line 895 and lines 897 to 900). Specifying the action is important because that there are two girls, not one, is the message that is being put across (see the next chapter for more on the functions of this passage).

There is, here, of course, more risk of accusations of collusion than in separate stories; hence Lena’s underscoring of the experience as an objective one, viewable on the television by all:

874 if you watched it yesterday
and

(>and we<) don’t know what’s going to happen
’cos that’s going to be next Wednesday.

Line 923 shows Lena attending to a potential criticism of collusion and complicity between herself and Andy. The knowledge is imparted to them. They do not conspiratorially produce it - it is a shared experience, and anybody (‘you’, line 874) could share it.

**Bonding and Segregating - ‘You-ness’**

*a) The use of animals’ tails*

Returning to the thrust of the foregoing text that consensualization and segregation are not always mutually exclusive, consider the following piece of data from Appendix CA5, part of which we have encountered previously in Chapter 4. Jessica, the zoologist, uses an example to explain to Clive Anderson on his television show how tails are good for sex:-

Extract 5.8 (Source AS/CA5)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 508  | Jessica: or sex (.).
| 509  | Tails are good for sex (.).
| 510  | err |
| 511  | Clive: so I’ve heard |
| 512  | Audience: ((laughter)) |
| 513  | Jessica: if you’re |
| 514  | ((she laughs)) |
| 515  | if you’re a ↑p↓eaco:ck |
| 516  | and you < spread that amazing tail out: > |
| 517  | and the hens stand in front of you |
| 518  | and they watch you very carefully |
| 519  | what they’re actually doing (.)
| 520  | scientists think (.)
| 521  | is is assessing |
how many of those wonderful eye spots
you’ve got on your tail feather (.)
Clive: Yeh
and (.) tail feathers
and if you happen to have
like a (sort of) low number of eye spots
maybe you’ve only got sixty
in your train (.)
Clive: Yes
you’re absolutely no good
you’re not going to get this
with any of the females
Clive: [ O:h no:

hundred and twenty eye spots
and they think
he’s a really fit, sexy male
and [ you’re away.

Clive: [ Yeh (.)

O:h right
I knew I was missing out somewhere

Rest: ((laugh))

Jessica uses a generalized ‘you’ and ‘your’, ‘you’ as a representative of a species (lines 513, 515 to 518, 523, 526, 528, 529, 531, 532 and 538), to make the potential experience a lived one for Clive and to give the impression that this could happen to any peacock, not just specific ones. Clive is co-opted into the action. Clive, however, in lines 539 to 541, exposes the anthropomorphism of Jessica. The irony of those lines is constructed with the help of the subsequent laughter from Jessica and the audience (line 542).

The generalized ‘you’ infers, from a knowledge standpoint, a rather superior position on the part of the teller. Jessica could have said:-

if we’re peacocks
and we spread our amazing tails out
Personalized Experiential Claims: 2

and the hens stand in front of us

etc.

but, as well as affording a degree of amusement, the construction Jessica does use, infers that Clive is not already entitled to the knowledge and that she is. The ‘we’ expression, as in my idealized three lines above, is often used by magicians when the end discovery of the trick is meant to surprise everyone, including the magician. The trick has a life of its own. In my idealized three lines the only people with entitlement to this knowledge of the peacock mating ritual would be the scientists:

519 what they’re actually doing (. )
520 scientists think (. )

Jessica’s knowledge is not like the magician’s. It is not constructed as being constituted on the spot. She constructs herself as being the sole owner of this knowledge amongst the present participants (Clive, herself and the audience) and she owns the knowledge already. Her knowledge is not being changed within the present interaction. What peacocks would do would be no surprise to her. For more insight into this extract, see Chapters 7 and 8.

Bonding and Segregating - ‘We-ness’ and ‘You-ness’

a) Frictional properties

In knowledge construction in classrooms, procedure often does have a sense of ‘we-ness’ about it (as with the magician) but, when the knowledge begins to be constructed in earnest, sometimes we see the same demarcation of knowledge entitlement, on the part of the teacher, as we saw with Jessica.

In Extract 5.9, from the second lesson on friction (with the teacher and the whole class), the teacher uses ‘we’ (lines 72, 75, 76 and 85) to co-opt pupils into contextually created knowledge but then, on line 87, it is only they, the pupils, who have to imagine the frictional properties of slopes, made of the various materials. The teacher constructs herself as already having access to the knowledge they will attain at the end.

Extract 5.9 (Source AS/F2)

72 We’re going to do another thing
73 all together
74 on err friction (.)
75 I thought we’d do the same
76 as we did on Friday
77 Pete sit down (.)
78 with some different surfaces.
79 (1.6)
   * * * * *
85 Let’s go through them (.)
86 sand
87 you’ve got to imagine a slope (.)
88 made out of these materials
89 sand, glass, wood, fur,
90 shiny stone, and snow (.)

**Bonding and Segregating - ‘You-ness’ Revisited**

*a) Rainbow circularity*

That this inference of knowledge entitlement is there in these kinds of ‘you’ constructions, can be clearly seen in our next example from the ‘senses’ data. Lena argues for a circular rainbow:-

Extract 5.10 (Source AS/TS1)

546 'cos (. ) if you go over a rainbow
547 in an airplane
548 and you look down
549 you can see it (.2)
550 but (at the bottom of it it’s ground)
551 Teacher: Have you done that?
552 Lena: No but my dad has

Lena uses the ‘you’ construction (lines 546 to 550) and the teacher then challenges Lena (line 551), requesting personal experiential back-up for Lena’s inferred knowledge entitlement.
Lena’s ‘you’ is the generalized one, ‘anybody’. The teacher’s ‘you’ is specifically Lena. This establishes the relations between general truth claims and particular exemplary experiences, as with scripts and instances, etc.

Lena, on line 552, opts out of claiming that her own experience led her to this knowledge. Her dad is the chosen experiencer (see Chapter 4).

b) Tasting snakes
Also in extract 5.11, we can see how a generalized ‘you’ leads to an attendance to specific experiences of specific people as knowledge entitlement.

Extract 5.11 (Source AS/TS10)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Lena:</th>
<th>Andy:</th>
<th>Teacher:</th>
<th>Lena:</th>
<th>Andy:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1316</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1317</td>
<td>[ (.8) you can (.6) You &gt;can&lt; eat it.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1318</td>
<td></td>
<td>[ Ye:h (.4)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1319</td>
<td></td>
<td>my dad’s done it</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1321</td>
<td>Teacher: Can- you?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1322</td>
<td>Lena: I don’t know-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1323</td>
<td>I wouldn’t want to</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1324</td>
<td>but you can.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1325</td>
<td>Andy: ((mutters during this))</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1326</td>
<td>Andy: ( ) you can.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lena, on line 1317, is asserting that snakes can (generally) be eaten. Andy states, on line 1319, that his dad has performed this action (a specific instance). The ‘you’ from the teacher, on line 1321, subsequent to Andy’s contribution, has now shifted to a more specific ‘you’. Lena attends to this shift in lines 1322 and 1323:-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Lena:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1322</td>
<td>Lena: I don’t know-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1323</td>
<td>I wouldn’t want to</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

and then serves it back into the general arena with line 1324:-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1324</td>
<td>but you can.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Andy also re-enforces the re-instated generalized nature of the ‘you’:-

1326       Andy:       ( ) you can.

c) The soft/hard glass scenario
In our next, rather lengthy, extract, we have a passage where ‘you’ never moves to the specific; the general nature of the ‘you’ is maintained throughout. The teacher sets out to prove that, although the softness of glass is usually outside of our perceptive capabilities, it is a reality. The idea is that reality can surprise people (line 935) and thus this is evidence that it must be outside of individual people and part of the knowledge bank available to all.

Extract 5.12 (Source AS/MP7)

920       Teacher:       Can you um (.)
921       can you see whether something’s soft
922       or do you have to feel it?
923       Eva:       Umm (.) if you= ((Other muttering))
924       Grant:       Sometimes you can (feel) it.
925       If it’s a bouncy carpet
926       (you can feel it with your foot)
927       Eva:       Yeh [ ( )
928       Andy:       [ If it’s a bouncy carpet
929       (you can see
930       if it’s soft)
931       and if there’s air in (it)
932       [ something with air in
933       often will be soft
934       Eva:       [ ((laughs. Formerly a ripple at ‘there’s’))
935       Teacher:       Sometimes you get a shock though
936       ↑dl↓on’t you
937       something’s hard
938       that you think’s soft and
939       [ something’s soft that you think’s
Personalized Experiential Claims: 2

940 Lena: [ A window is a bit soft (.)
941 and it’s definitely smooth
942 (2. 0)
943 Teacher: I remember reading somewhere
944 that in hot weather
945 even windows start to err
946 (.6)
947 to run
948 as if they’re (.) liquid.
949 You can’t really see it
950 but they start to become
951 a bit (.) liquidy
952 (.6)
953 [ I don’t know whether that’s true
954 Andy: [ Crayons turn liquidy
955 Eva: Oh yeh=

The movement to the specific, which we observed in previous examples, often can be used to display a severance of consensual opinion. Here, in this data example, specific experiences are never an issue. The ‘instances’ are themselves generalized (lines 924 and 935). What we have are generalized principles about glass, supported by generalized principles of ‘what-happens-when’. The talk is fairly consensual throughout, despite Andy’s input on lines 928 and 933, that vision can link us with reality. The reader can detect the argumentative nature of Andy’s input by the repetition-plus-change feature of lines 928 to 929. First, I present Grant’s contribution, then Andy’s:-

(i)
925 If it’s a bouncy carpet
926 (you can feel * * * *
(ii)
928 Andy: [ If it’s a bouncy carpet
929 (you can see
Andy points out that, for example, the presence of air denotes softness and this presence can be seen in, say, a bouncy carpet. He has inherited the term ‘bouncy carpet’ from Grant’s line 925, which is a term that, of course, sides with the construction of the superiority (in this case) of feeling over sight. Andy makes ‘bouncy’ a visual metaphor. He stresses the air which can be seen or, at least, the effect of which can be seen. He emphasizes the word ‘air’ twice (lines 931 and 932) and the word ‘soft’ (line 933), thus linking them together.

931 and if there’s air in (it)
932 [ something with air in
933 often will be soft

Grant and the teacher consensualize opinions in the extract by casting narrative instances as generalized experiences. The generalized ‘you’ is further generalized by Grant’s ‘Sometimes’ in line 924, and ‘if’ in line 925. The teacher, after Andy’s dissenting contribution, similarly uses ‘Sometimes’ in line 935. The common-knowledge construction ‘Td ýon’t you’ on line 936 (see Edwards and Mercer, 1987) helps the consensuality. She also uses the word ‘though’ on line 935, which is a fairly soft indicator of disagreement. The upshot or trajectory of this is that Andy is silenced until line 954, when he offers a parallel example of a substance with the same constructed material properties as glass (crayons) - a partial agreement with that construction.

The teacher’s initial question on lines 920 to 922

920 Teacher: Can you um (.)
921 can you see whether something’s soft
922 or do you have to feel it?

is not even-handed. The ‘have to’ on line 922 implies that feeling is a more reliable indicator of reality than seeing - a kind of experiential bottom-line. The teacher’s contribution on lines 935 to 939 implies this too. This removes, to a great extent, the possibility of a mutual, egalitarian, co-existence between the ‘realities’ of feeling and seeing phenomena.
Lena draws out the nub of these observations, in lines 940 to 942, by returning to the contentious issue of glass and agreeing with the teacher’s ‘softness-of-glass’ proposal.

The teacher, following Lena’s intervention, gains a better purchase on her personal knowledge entitlement by introducing her source of knowledge as informative reading matter; a vague source reference and therefore unaccessible to the other participants:-

943 Teacher: I remember reading somewhere

The next and last time she brings in the generalized ‘you’, on line 949,

949 You can’t really see it

it is as a reported statement from that source.

These constructions from the teacher, that common-sense would often lead us to the wrong conclusions, construct Andy as a sensible individual. He has no constructed face-loss in the interaction. The teacher too (lines 943 to 953) constructs herself as one of these common-sense individuals, who has had to be instructed by a third party (the reading matter) as to the reality that underlies ordinary appearances.

In this extract the teacher introduces two correctives to visual appearances - touch and authoritative texts.

In this extract, the ‘you’ is never made specific; the general nature of talked-about experiences is maintained; ‘actual’ incidences to legitimate theories are never required and a satisfactory outcome for the ‘softness-of-glass’ proposition is reached (lines 954 and 955). Perhaps we can deduce at the onset by the uneven-handedness of the question, already discussed, that consensualization is likely to be the order of the day.

d) Jim’ll Fix It

My next four extracts come from Appendix TS7. They are set out in the order in which they occur. The teacher, in the lunch-time discussion about the senses, has explained how her son was on the BBC television programme ‘Jim’ll Fix It’, where his dream (i) to play the piano accompaniment to, (ii) to play the violin accompaniment to, and (iii)
to sing the three voices in, his own carol composition, all at the same time, was fulfilled. The teacher is, thus, debunking the notion Lena has injected, with her telling of ‘The Return of the Psammead’ story (also from the television), that shadows have existential substance. The teacher does this by invoking the discourse of technology (perhaps appropriate for a scientific discussion about the senses) and introduces the notion of ‘camera trickery’.

Unlike in the previous data extract (Extract 5.12), the ‘you’ here is always specific.

Extract 5.13 (Source AS/TS7)

1043 Andy: >I< think I saw that one.
1044 Teacher: Oh
1045 it was a long time ↑ag↓o.
1046 It was nineteen eighty six
1047 How old would you be then?

Extract 5.14 (Source AS/TS7)

1050 Lena: I was one years old
1051 'cos I was born
1052 in nineteen eighty five.
1053 Someone(s): ((background muttering))
1054 Eva: I would be two=
1055 Lena: so I was
1056 Teacher: ↑Y↓eh
1057 Andy: ↑ I was
1058 Grant: [ I was born in nineteen eighty ↑f↓our

Extract 5.15 (Source AS/TS7)

1059 Teacher: [ and it was Christmas ↑E↓ve
1060 [.4]
1061 [ he was (.) he was on the television
Personalized Experiential Claims: 2

Lena: [ Christmas $\downarrow$E$\uparrow$ve

Teacher: but I don’t think

you’d $\wedge w$ould remember it

$\uparrow w$ould you

Extract 5.16 (Source AS/TS7)

Eva: I think I found that- hh out on hh

(1.0)

It was Boxing Day

I first saw it

I think=

Teacher: (Oh)

$\downarrow w$as it hhh ((laughingly))

you remember $\downarrow th \uparrow$at .hh hh

In Extract 5.13, the ‘you’ (line 1048) is part of a challenge to the experiential claim of Andy on line 1043. The ‘Oh’, on line 1045, displays a dispreferential input. The teacher, throughout the extracts, outlaws the children’s specific knowledge entitlements by constructing their mental underdevelopment - lines 1048, lines 1063 to 1065 and lines 1087 to 1089.

The children display their accountability to access an acceptable knowledge entitlement in the many ‘I’ constructions they produce. As we shall see in Chapter 7 (Extracts 7.27 to 7.33), Eva, the initial part of whose contribution is set out here (lines 1082 to 1086), finds a compromise, reconciling her underdevelopment with her knowledge entitlement and making them mutually sustainable propositions.

At the stage we leave the extracts, the teacher (lines 1087 to 1089) is still outlawing strongly Eva’s knowledge entitlement. The dispreferential markers - ‘(Oh)’ (line 1087), the outbreath (line 1088) and inbreath (line 1089) - together with the laughter (line 1088), the upward intonations (lines 1088 and 1089), rendering Eva accountable for an explanation for her precocious understanding, strongly dispute Eva’s claim to knowledge. At the beginning of the previous sentence I mention dispreference. Nof\fingert (1991) explains preference and dispreference for us:-
“Responses to first parts of adjacency pairs and … responses to other ‘first’ actions are organized by a preference system in which some second actions are treated (by participants) as preferred and others as dispreferred (see Heritage, 1984, pp. 265-269).”

(p. 71)

The dispreferential nature of a response is marked, as here.

As can be seen from the above quotation, main-line thinking in conversation analysis emphasizes that preference and dispreference displays belong exclusively to second parts of adjacency pairs. My standpoint differs. I am contending that displays of dispreference can address the whole negotiated tenor of the subsequent talk, rather than be orientated to single utterances.

It is not only the teacher who is displaying dispreference. Eva produces inbreaths and outbreathes on line 1082 and she softens and mollifies her output, on lines 1082 to 1086 with ‘I think’s (lines 1082 and 1086).

So what has occasioned differential experience and knowledge constructions? What has occasioned a resistance to a consensual version of experience and knowledge? The teacher could have accepted the children’s experience entitlement to the ‘Jim’ll Fix It’ programme and knowledge entitlement to the notion of ‘camera trickery’ and the idea of substantive shadows would have been dispelled. By so doing, however, she would not have been attending to her accountability to instruct which, at this stage in the proceedings, she seems to be doing. The children have had ‘misguided’ notions and she is ‘setting them right’.

Warning - Beware of irrevocably associating the general ‘you’ with consensus and the specific ‘you’ with severance. It is the way the terms are used in situated circumstances, together with many other discursive resources, which constitute their effect. We can see, for example, how, in Extract 5.17, the specific ‘you’ is consensualizing.

e) Frictional properties of ice

Earlier in this chapter, when I introduced the various implications that the terms ‘we’ and ‘you’ have for bonding and segregating (pp. 188 and 189), I mentioned recruitment. The next extract exemplifies this feature of recruitment. The teacher, in the second lesson on friction, is attributing her proposition about the frictional properties of ice to a discovery of the children in the first lesson on friction the previous Friday. To recruit your interlocutors as joint participants in your experiential
claims and construct ‘a priori’ their agreement to your present proposals, indeed to construct them as being the manufacturers and agents of those present proposals, is a very effective rhetorical strategy. The teacher has been narrating her early morning experience of skidding on ice while driving. It is not that experience that the children are constructed as sharing. The shared experience is a lesson where conclusions about the frictional properties of ice were reached. The teacher connects her individual experience to theories constructed as proposed by the children in a lesson, prior to that experience. This is a more powerful interactional move than to connect her experience to propositions issuing from herself alone, subsequent to that single experience. Single experiential occurrences, as warrants for knowledge positions, can often run into trouble but, when they substantiate an already formed knowledge proposition, are less likely to do so. The teacher has donned a rhetorical suit of armour. How can interactants dispute propositions that they are constructed as creating and which a subsequent experience has upheld? She is turning around the tables and constructing herself as being recruited into their knowledge claims, rather than vice versa.

Extract 5.17 (Source AS/F3)

99 because
100 as you said on Friday
101 ice doesn’t have very much friction (.)

The teacher is recruiting the pupils as having already endorsed what she is now saying. She uses the specific ‘you’ (line 100) to remove her bias, her stake in the production of the experiential claim which upholds the knowledge claim. If she had proclaimed ‘as we said on Friday’, there might have been inferences of manipulation of the knowledge claim on her part, especially as they were her experiences which confirmed the truth-aspect of that claim.

f) The use of animals’ tails

We also witness the recruitment ‘you’ in this next extract, which is taken from the ‘Clive Anderson programme’ data. Clive has ridiculed Jessica’s advocation of the pre-occupying study of the back-ends of animals.
Extract 5.18 (Source AS/CA5)

497 Jessica: something like (. )
498 err have you ever ↑seen (. )
499 you said you’d been ↓out↑t to Africa
500 and seen elephants running across the plains
501
502 Clive: [ I have (. ) um
503 Jessica: if elephants are alarmed
504 they’ll all hold their tails
505 bolt upright in the air
506 when they run
507 Clive: Yeh=

Jessica, on line 497, displays a search for an example of an animal with a useful tail. By so doing, she infers that there are many examples from which to choose. On line 498 she begins her recruiting move with an experiential question directed towards Clive. Interactants can often easily resist recruitment from such a move, however. On line 499 she repairs her initial move (‘repairs’ does not mean ‘corrects’). She displays a realization that Clive has already furnished her with the experiential information she requires. As I intimated in the brackets, the initial question (line 498) is not a mistake. Jessica displays her move from a direct question to reported speech from her interactant. Clive is not only recruited into the experience, but also into the knowledge claim that elephants run across the African plains with bolt-upright tails, when alarmed (lines 503 to 506), which comes after this experiential recruitment. This knowledge-claim recruitment is evidenced in line 507:-

507 Clive: Yeh=

This knowledge-claim recruitment is facilitated by the previous experiential recruitment.

Clive’s response, on line 502, to the shared-experience construction is consensual, whereas, if Jessica had attempted present recruitment, instead of constructed past recruitment, there might have been more scope for resistance. Notice,
too, that Clive begins his consensual utterance when only ‘Africa’ has been mentioned, not yet the plains and the elephants, the latter two overlapping his consensual utterance:

499 you said you’d been \textit{down} to Africa
500 \textit{and} seen elephants running across the plains
502 Clive: \textit{I have (.) um}

He is, however, consensualizing with the whole package, even the subsequent knowledge-claim about elephants’ tails.

Warning - Clive is not forced, even by the execution of these rhetorical steps by Jessica, to align his position with hers. With dispreference markers he could, for example, deny that he had said any such thing about having had experience of Africa or he could, from his experience, refute the knowledge claim. However, the first would rob him of any knowledge entitlement and the second could, necessarily inputted after his initial alignment with the experience (line 502), invoke speculation that he had not, after all, been to Africa; it could be viewed as a manifestation of his ignorance. I am not suggesting that any of these possibilities were interactionally at stake - rather, I am pointing out that analysing a text’s rhetoric is not the same as claiming its persuasive effects.

It is interesting, as a postscript, to inspect the original extract where Clive had mentioned his African experience. Such an inspection makes us aware of variability of versions and makes us realize that utterances are produced in situated talk and that reported speech is not a representation of a previous reality. It is constructed as reported and produced for its ‘in situ’ rhetorical effect. Edwards and Potter (1992a) address this notion of variability:

"Rather than trying to sort out a factual from a false version, we can make sense of this variability by considering the pragmatic contexts in which the two accounts occur (cf. Potter and Wetherell, 1987)."

(p. 62)

In the original extract, Clive had been counteracting Jessica’s assertion that zebras are camouflaged on the plains of Africa. There were no elephants in sight, as was the case in the reported version.
Bonding and Segregating - ‘We-ness’ Revisited

‘We’ claims, like ‘you’ claims, have the resource of being both general and specific but, unlike ‘you’ claims, ‘we’ claims only imply plurality (even the Royal ‘we’ addresses the issue of plurality).

In recent sections of this chapter we have not had much to say about ‘we’ claims, except to point out i) their weakness, as opposed to ‘you’ claims, when the requirement is for the construction of initial differential knowledge states, this requirement being the case in much instructional discourse; ii) the sense of manipulation by the speaker that they can imply.

a) The soft/hard glass scenario

As regards i), ‘we’ claims, too, can be segregating when the ‘we’ excludes the interactants. In the ‘hardness/softness-of-glass’ data earlier in this chapter, we saw the children creating a ‘we-ness’ of experiences from individual contributions, with the teacher excluded from the aggregated knowledge gained from those experiences.

In our next example, the knowledge belongs to the characters appearing in the experiential story and to Eva, the speaker, as one of them. A ‘we-ness’ is created that separates these characters from the other discourse interactants. The data is taken from those selfsame aforementioned individual experiences, which were mentioned in the last paragraph, warranting the existence of hard, as opposed to soft, glass. The ‘soft glass’ proposition is the teacher’s.

Extract 5.20 (Source AS/MP5)

780 Eva: [ Oh (that was)
781 that reminds me
782 Lena: he hasn’t even got a a new ↑win↓dow (.)
783 (it’s) still [ ( )

Personalized Experiential Claims: 2

Extract 5.19 (Source AS/CA2)

183 Clive: [ Well I’ve heard that
184 but I’ve been to the plains of Africa
185 and th they’re the ones
186 you spot straight away [ ( )}
Personalized Experiential Claims: 2

784 Teacher: [ I suppose it (.)
785 it doesn’t matter so much
786 being in the garage
787 ↑does it
788 Rest: No ((generally))
789 Andy: My daddy put sello↑tape all over it
790 ((explosively jokingly))
791 Rest: ((laughter))
792 Eva: When my umm (.)
793 Teacher: ↑Sellotape
794 Andy: Y y yeh ((laughs))
795 Eva: When we (. ) my mum [ left the keys
796 in the car (.8) um
797 Grant: [ When
798 they knocked down our greenhouse
799 Eva: we had to go down
800 to this old (. ) man
801 and we had to ask him
802 if he (. )
803 and we borrowed a screwdriver from him
804 and we smashed the windscreen
805 and we couldn’t get our arm in
806 and we (. ) and we took (. )
807 it took quite a few people
808 to actually manage
809 to to get the keys out of the car
810 ’cos (. ) we were s
811 ’cos (. )
812 ’cos they w (. )
813 ’cos of where we broke the glass.
814 Teacher: Um

Two attempts to begin Eva’s story are displayed (lines 780 and 781; line 792) and the story gains space to unfold on lines 795 and 796 and then lines 799 to line 813.
Although neither of the first two starts contained ‘we’, the third one does (line 795), which is repaired to ‘my mum’ (see previous assertions, in this chapter, on the display nature of repair). The previous chapter of this thesis (Chapter 4) explained the rhetorical force of ‘my mum’ and, against that specifically defined, high-status (in Eva’s life) individual, we have, on line 800, a non-specific, almost-anybody-will-do personage to this old (. ) man

Eva and her mum are to be found as a ‘we-ness’, in the part of the story where they struggle alone, on lines 799, 801, 803, 804 and 805. Their actions are in unison, even going as far as

and we couldn’t get our arm in

They could not reach into the car through the smashed windscreen.

As in the children’s story about the enormous turnip, Eva, as a repair from the ‘we’ construction of herself and her mum (line 806), introduces ‘quite a few people’ (line 807), also non-specific, anybody-will-do, witness-role personages, introduced as aiders in the achievement of the required task. The consorted effort and the achievement are portrayed, on line 808, through the term ‘actually manage’:

to actually manage

This term conjures up the former futile struggle of herself and her mum and the struggle of the amassed crowd before their success. This is quantitative rhetoric (see Potter, Wetherell and Chitty, 1991). It is a case of ‘Many hands make light work’ rather than ‘Too many cooks spoil the broth’.

On lines 810 to 813, Eva deals with the attributive aspect for the struggle. She sets out to provide an account. Why was it so difficult to retrieve the car keys through a smashed windscreen? Whose fault was it? Over three repairs, attribution for the struggle and the difficulty of the retrieval task is tossed around between ‘we’ (line 810) and ‘they’, the helping crowd (line 812). At last (on line 813) Eva attributes the blame to herself and her mum for breaking the glass in the wrong place:
This constructed inconsequential nature of human actions, as well as highlighting the sequential nature of the story, also highlights the superiority of external ‘realities’ over people’s actions. She portrays people as potential non-manipulators of events. Like the rock, which realists construct as a stumbling block, the realist construction of which is shown to us in Edwards, Ashmore and Potter (1994: pp. 30 and 31), the glass restricts people’s endeavours. It is an external reality and it is hard.

Back to the constructed ‘we-ness’. What has occasioned Eva to bond so much with the other story characters in a discursive situation where the other child participants are forwarding the same knowledge claim as she is; that glass is hard? If we examine the preceding data perhaps we can see how this has come about. (Note the recruitment into my text of the reader/examiner as virtual authors by the use of the ‘we’s in that last sentence. This undermines the potential for criticism.)

The accountability of lines 782 to 794 seems partially to be to provide humour at the expense of dads. There is a lot of laughter (lines 790, 791 and 794), as Andy’s dad is constructed as sticking sellotape over a broken window. The teacher displays her orientation to the abnormality of this action in line 793:-

793 Teacher: ↑Sellotape

Of course, Andy’s construction of his dad has the same rhetorical effect as Eva’s subsequent construction of herself and her mum. Andy’s dad struggles with ‘reality’ and external objects in the same way as Eva, her mum and the crowd do and external ‘reality’ defeats him too.

Eva orientates herself to a potential inference behind the teacher’s line 793:-

793 Teacher: ↑Sellotape

As well as inferring that the action is abnormal, this utterance could infer incredulity of the story, especially as the teacher is displaying adherence to a, in the circumstances, counter knowledge claim. Eva, in her story, creates the internal ‘we-ness’, already described, and so distances herself from Andy and his potentially tainted reputation as
the producer of incredible stories. She does this even though Andy is espousing the
same 'hardness-of-glass' knowledge claim as she herself.

The teacher, after Eva's story input, displays her acceptance of the story:-

814 Teacher: Um

There is no inference of incredulity this time.

b) Touching rainbows

My last data example in this section, indeed in this chapter, displays the universal
bonding aspect of 'we'. The teacher, in the data on the senses, is asking whether a
rainbow can be touched.

Extract 5.21 (Source AS/TS1)

Teacher: * * * * * * *
515 Lena: No: [.2] we're not high enough

The teacher uses an impersonal construction to frame the question (line 515), the
first part of an adjacency pair. Lena, on line 516, provides the second part of the
question/answer pair, followed by an account for her negative response. The second
part has dispreference markers - the lengthening of the vowel 'o' in the 'No', the pause
and the account (see again Nofsinger, 1991, p. 71 [referred to earlier] for an
explanation of preference and dispreference structures; also Atkinson and Heritage,
1984). The account, 'we're not high enough' has a generalized 'we' in it; all human-
kind, if not creature-kind, is not high enough to touch a rainbow. We all share the same
experience of not being high enough; therefore we are all entitled to the same
knowledge; that rainbows are not touchable. It is common-sense knowledge (see
Edwards and Mercer, 1987). There is, here, no differential entitlement to knowledge,
because there has been no differential experience in this respect. Lena is just stating the
obvious. That there is no differential experience is a warrant for the knowledge claim.

Conclusion

In this chapter:-
(i) We have seen how 'we' and 'you' are used, with plenty of indexical flexibility, in the trading-off of generalities and specific instances, in the discourse of knowledge and experience.

(ii) We have seen how 'we' and 'you' can be used to both bond participants together (or sections of participants) and segregate participants with regard to their knowledge claims.

(iii) We have discussed the differential inferences of 'we' and 'you'.

(iv) We have rejected a rigid adherence to the notion of 'a priori' structural requirements in talk and text and have also rejected the linguistic proposal, related to that notion of structural requirements, that pronouns need referents either within or outside of the text (anaphoric or indexical reference).
CHAPTER SIX
THE ORGANIZATION OF NARRATIVE FACT

Superficially, it would seem that, by studying fact organization, and with that experiential claims, we were moving away from the person constructions, with which we have been dealing in the previous two chapters and looking more at the experience itself as an object. In an ethnomethodological study, however, as has already been intimated when we looked contrastively at 'repertoire analysis' in Chapter 2, the two cannot be separated in this way. In the examples which follow, the construction of intersubjective orientations among the narrative characters can verify the objectivity of phenomena as well as construct personal identity; remembering can be constructed by social and consensual orientations of participants towards fact, constructed as past experience; and a character's disposition can be discursively transmitted by narrating fact. Thus, we can see that the persons (constructed both as discourse participants and story characters) and the objects in experiential claims are reflexively interrelated. This important point will be further re-enforced in Chapters 7 and 8.

Before I embark on Chapter 7, which will be involved with how experiential claims are legitimated, amongst other things in terms of their realism and facticity, I shall, in this chapter, present work from other authors which demonstrates how the organization of factual narrative can achieve social actions and attend to present local concerns. Edwards (1997, Chapter 10), while discounting cognitive psychological and narrative psychological approaches to stories, provides us with an analytical counter-example from the work of Sacks of:-

"... stories being generated very precisely for the occasion of their production, and with regard to the current concerns of the interaction in which they are told."

(p. 290)

In order to warrant knowledge claims, experiential claims have to display themselves as authentic, universally available, normative, etc. As we shall see in Chapter 7, they utilize a number of devices to do so, many occurring in a narrative format.

The narrative examples from other authors, presented herewith, are experiential claims but not in knowledge-construction contexts and will display the construction of social remembering; of intersubjective orientations; and of dispositional traits. All will be paralleled by my own data, as was the case in Chapter 3, when I dealt with
knowledge construction. Most of my own examples will be in the context of knowledge construction but I offer two examples from my own data in connection with intersubjective orientations; an additional one in connection with identity construction, as well as one in the context of knowledge construction. My justification for the inclusion of identity construction is to show the construction of knowledge, not as something separate, but as akin to many other discursive constructions, using similar devices. For too long, many educational researchers have considered knowledge construction as something apart from everyday life; they have not contemplated that it could be a ‘way of talking’ like any other, the latter being my portrayal here. To discover what makes knowledge construction such, we can look at experiential narratives in general and then move on, in Chapter 7, to experiential claims in that context and see how they are legitimated as such.

The amount of participation in an experience can be carefully discursively ‘engineered’. This is something to be aware of in discourse/conversation analysis, as the term ‘participant’ stands in danger of becoming a bottom-line ‘reality’ for us researchers within it. Even in examples where the participants are recounting events seen on television or on the cinema, they may report these events as if they actually took part in them, as primary experiences instead of secondary ones. Consider the following two examples; the first (from Edwards and Middleton, 1986b) from a student discussion to collectively remember the film ‘E.T.’; the second (from my own data), Lena’s introduction, into the lunch-time discussion on the senses, of the television children’s serial ‘The Return of the Psammead’:

Extract 6.1 (Source 23)

D: we were in this sterile environment
(from Edwards and Middleton, 1986b)

and

Extract 6.2 (Source AS/TS3)

874 if you watched it yesterday

Edwards and Middleton’s participants can enter the action of the film, ‘E.T.’, because they are accountable, as a group, to remember. In this social science experiment, group
consensus matters more than proof-making for ‘reality’. Even viewed as a resumption after a digression, the student’s contribution can be seen as creating a sense of solidarity among the present participants. Lena, on the other hand, in the second example, has to construct the television programme as publicly available, in its context within a scientific discussion about the substantiveness or otherwise of shadows, and therefore cannot enter the film and deconstruct its objectivity, as something apart from the viewers, as does the student in Edwards and Middleton’s data.

As mentioned earlier, here in this chapter we have a mixture of the following - experiential claims in a knowledge context; experiential claims outside of that context (to construct memory, the paranormal [knowledge is constructed as universally available, the paranormal is not], identity, and individual psyches). Sometimes knowledge claims themselves are in the form of fact constructions, e.g. in my data, Appendix MPI:-

Extract 6.3 (Source AS/MP1)

612 Teacher: Yeh
613 but glass isn’t always like that.
614 The glass in the foundry
615 when it’s being made
616 is like a liːquip

Here, no mental state is overtly formulated and, in educational and political circles, objects of knowledge are often talked about as having a separate existence from human minds, although there is the implicit acknowledgement that they were once accessed by the minds of knowledge seekers and are still available to be re-accessed by subsequent minds if those minds so desire. However, usually we just take their validity on trust. The difference between knowledge as acquired and knowledge as constructed, which is the discursive model I am promoting, is again apparent.

Experience, on the other hand, is not experience unless there are animate beings partaking of it. It is the coming together of reality and those animate beings. The knowledge of others can directly become your knowledge but the experience of others cannot so easily become your experience.

Having said all that, however, I must add that the demarcation between experiential claims and other kinds of fact construction is as cloudy as that between the
latter and knowledge claims. Again the lesson we learn is to study how the participants orientate to these problematical issues. Are they problematic for them? They are for me, of course, because I am writing a thesis on ‘experience’, but for participants who are not engaged in this pursuit, the notion of ‘experience’ may be a complete red-herring.

Before I embark on my undertaking for this chapter, I shall refer the reader to Potter (1996c), who, in his comprehensive work on fact discourse, leads us on a conducted tour of various research orientations and bestows us with insight into how facts are viewed within those frameworks. He escorts us through social studies of science (including SSK - The Sociology of Scientific Knowledge), ethnomethodology, conversation analysis, semiology, post-structuralism, postmodernism and discursive and constructionist approaches. In relation to the latter, he acquaints us with the action orientation of descriptions (the interactional work they do) and their epistemological orientation (how they construct their facticity), before progressing onwards and demonstrating to us how the construction of interests and category entitlement can bolster or undermine such descriptions. In this remit Potter discusses such issues as footing, alignment and the construction of stake and neutrality. Moving on, he shows us how out-thereness is constructed, how representations are worked up and how facts can be criticized.

My own work will overlap with many of these issues which are proffered in Potter’s book in the later chapters, but coming at these issues and constructing a rhetorical argument in relation to knowledge and experience through my own set of data, I hope my work will complement rather than regurgitate that found in Potter. However, I will say, that, common to Potter, I am not searching for ‘a valid reality’, ‘a true version of events’. Edwards (1993), in a discussion of conceptual content in children’s talk advises us not simply to ‘believe’ children but to orientate ourselves to their descriptions, accounts, etc., rather than approaching their discourse with an already constructed dichotomy between what they think as opposed to what they say. Likewise, in approaching fact constructions, the analytic stance here adopted does not bring to bear a lie/truth dichotomy. Instead we can research the action orientation, epistemological orientation, etc. of such descriptions (as discussed). In addition, I am not engaging in any debate over whether reality exists or not (the realist/relativist debate), although the orientation of such an approach as mine does presuppose the
deconstruction of reality, such as I have just effected in the few lines preceding this sentence.

Although, as stated previously, I am analysing by the tenets of the Discourse Action Model developed by Edwards and Potter (1992a), I am not myself producing any generalized theory nor am I implying that the examples of fact-accomplishing devices I am presenting here are an exhaustive set. Before we begin with my examples of fact organization, let us take a glance at Edwards and Potter's Discourse Action Model or DAM.

Action
1. The focus is on action, not cognition.
2. Remembering and attribution become, operationally, reportings (and accounts, description, formulations, versions and so on)
3. Reportings are situated in activity sequences such as those involving invitation refusals, blamings and defences.

Fact and interest
4. There is a dilemma of stake or interest, which is often managed by doing attribution via reports.
5. Reports are therefore constructed/displayed as factual by way of a variety of discursive techniques.
6. Reports are rhetorically organized to undermine alternatives.

Accountability
7. Reports attend to the agency and accountability in the reported events.
8. Reports attend to the accountability of the current speaker's action, including those done in reporting.
9. The latter two concerns are often related, such that 7 is deployed for 8, and 8 is deployed for 7.

This DAM is constructed within a framework of re-looking at cognitive psychology and attribution theory in particular. My own DAM, constructed with knowledge construction and experiential claims in mind, might look a little different but would have the same central issues of talk as action, the prevalence of attendance to
alternative versions and attendance to accountabilities, fact accomplishment to offset claims of stake, etc.

Now on with the examples of fact organization in narrative format.

**Consensus Formatting in Social Remembering**

My first example comes from the article, already mentioned, by Edwards and Middleton (1986b) on joint remembering. This will demonstrate how a display of consensus can be a device to construct a sense of a socially agreed version of events, which is what is important when we are trying to construct social memory. The conversational discourse of eight people was examined as they recalled jointly the feature film ‘E.T.’ The authors identified a validation function - the participants construct the account as jointly agreed upon. Edwards and Middleton state:-

“...the significance of past experiences for current purposes is generally of greater importance than accuracy and completeness, the usual criteria in psychological studies”

(p. 423)

One of the identified constructions within that function is that of consensus and assent. Let us look at their Sequence 23, page 446:-

Expansion of Extract 6.1 (Source Sequence 23)

D: we were in this sterile environment
K: yeh and then they’re lying in two little beds
D: yeh and they’re re- monitoring both Elliot’s and (&)
K: monitoring both that’s right
D: (&) E.T. and the hearts they are exactly the same aren’t they
J: and the and the heart
K: yeh and so you get the idea that E.T”s getting smaller and smaller and Elliot seems to
D: yeh
J: they start separating
D: yeh | they start separating
K: | they separate
J: as the man in the film says
D: yeh
Organization of Narrative Fact

J: they’re [separate]
D: [they’re beginning to separate (mock American accent)]

Underlining here is not an indicator of intonation but an analytic device to direct our attention to the construction of consensus which is taking place throughout this extract. Also the (&) symbol replaces the more familiar =, indicating that D’s turn continues with no pause, despite its being overlapped by K’s consensual utterance.

Edwards and Middleton draw our attention to the expressions of assent, the unison-speaking, the repetitions, the paraphrasing, the completing of sentences, etc., which succeed in producing a display of agreement and make the story less disputable.

Here is part of my own data, from Appendix TS3, which aptly displays these same features. This time the symbols are intonational and correspond to the transcription symbols presented at the beginning of this thesis.

Expansion of Extract 6.2 (Source AS/TS3)

Lena: >*

874 if you watched it yesterday
875 they were at the table <(.)
876 and she: was .) > sitting at the table
877 and the oth <(.)
878 and the nice one
879 had to (.) um go underneath the table (.)
880 so that she wouldn’t know
881 there (was) two of them (.)
882 and she went (.)
883 and she: (.4)
884 and she said “I don’t like this (dinner)”
885 and she .hh (.)
886 and (.) she got up
887 >and said “I’m not eating it”
888 and spit her tongue out < at the wo:man
889 and w (.)
890 and [ she said “Get upstairs”]
and she did go upstairs

Andy: Yeh

(1.6)

and she did go upstairs

[ but then the other one (came out)

Lena: [ and then (. ) she went upstairs (. )

and the other girl

that was un under the table

> that nice one <

Andy: [ came out

Lena: [ ( ) went down to (. ) s hh sit

crr hh (. )

and (. ) um (. )

and when the woman came in

she said (. )

she went “↑Ahh”

she dropped her plates

and ran ↑ou↓t

Andy: Yeh

she screamed

>and< ran ↑ou↓t the ↓door ((laughingly))

Lena: ↑Y↓eh

Teacher: Yeh

(.4)

so (. )

(.6)

Grant: then they (um) (.6)

and then they wished

to go to the future

Lena: [ ↑Y↓eh ((eagerly)) and they (. )

Andy: [ Yeh

Lena: and they (. )

(>and we<) don’t know what’s going to happen

‘cos that’s going to be next Wednesday.
In this extract from a lunch-time discussion between four children and their teacher, we can see those same features of assenting (e.g. lines 892, 909, 912, 913, 920, 921), completing (e.g. line 900), repeating (e.g. line 894), paraphrasing (e.g. lines 910 & 911) etc. as we noted in the Edwards and Middleton passage. Here the functions of the passage are complex - attempts to reconcile the factual and fictional worlds. The teacher resists this reconciliation and therefore a combined effort is called for to show the factual basis of this story, i.e. that the girl is not a schizoid singularity co-existing with her other half (this is the story which Lena initially had put forward), but a duality of girls with the differentiating feature of niceness and naughtiness. The first story could not find credibility in this lunch-time session, which had started out as a scientifically discoursed interaction about shadows.

Also unlike the ‘E.T.’ data, the story begins life as Lena’s extended turn. The children have not been asked to construct a joint story as in the ‘E.T.’ data. Andy responds to Lena’s appeal to common experience (line 874)

874 if you watched it yesterday

Also Lena’s function to separate the girls into two separate entities becomes clear, e.g. line 881:-

881 there (was) two of them (.)

Lena requires consensual display to re-introduce a scientific, rather than a magical, discourse, which is rather weak in this context.

As well as the consensual aspect, this passage highlights other aspects of social remembering as delineated by Edwards and Middleton. The first line

874 if you watched it yesterday

and the last two lines

923 (>and we<) don’t know what’s going to happen
924 ‘cos that’s going to be next Wednesday.
orientate and frame the participants in relation to the account.

Also the passage is full of the word ‘and’ as a continuer that organizes the sequentiality of the narrative throughout time, to give it plausibility in terms of human actions and reactions. Edwards and Middleton quote Garnham (1983) who writes in relation to stories:-

“...people can use their general knowledge about human motivation and planning to understand them.”

We shall return to this point later in this thesis.

Thirdly, the pronominal ‘she’ is favoured over the adjective-noun combinations ‘the old woman’, ‘the naughty girl’. This promotes communicative cohesion but not grammatical cohesion. Grammatical accuracy is not sought after. After all, the other participants have been constructed as joint television viewers. They are already in tune with the characters. So it is clear Lena’s function in telling the story is not to inform. Edwards and Middleton render a quotation from Bartlett (1932):-

“ In a world of constantly changing environment, literal recall is extraordinarily unimportant.”

In conclusion, let us deduce that Edwards and Middleton are encouraging us to view social, joint remembering as an activity which is attending to present concerns, where accuracy is subsumed under talk’s business, e.g. the use of experiential voicing can serve as an accuracy warrant. This approach to memory is, as yet, extremely controversial, as can be seen in arguments for and against in Conway (1992). In an review of psychological work on 'autobiographical memory', Conway (1990) himself regards the appropriate place for such research to be firmly within the more traditional conceptual and explanatory framework provided by mainstream cognitive psychology.

**Dialogic Voicings in Displays of Intersubjectivity**

My next example shows how a factual experiential narrative can construct the objectivity of a perceived phenomenon and, at the same time, afford the phenomenon a paranormal quality through constructed differing perceptions of it. It comes from a study by Wooffitt (1992) of talk about instances of paranormal experiences. Wooffitt covers several issues of fact organization which can be found in these accounts - 1) their beginnings; 2) ‘I was just doing X...... when Y’ (also discussed in Wooffitt, 1991); and 3) the one I wish to focus upon, voices. The use of voices has already been
evidenced in this chapter in the ‘E.T.’ data (Extract 6.1 expansion) and the twin girl data (Extract 6.2 expansion). More on this subject and how voicings can achieve facticity will be found in the next chapter on the legitimation of experiential claims but, for now, I want to concentrate on the specific uses which Wooffitt brings to our notice and especially dialogic voicings. Wooffitt illustrates a whole range of inferential activities mediated through the use of utterances designed to be heard as reported speech. Wooffitt uses voices to show us how the objectivity of the phenomena is sustained and how a ‘mystery’ is pre-monitored but my intention is to relay briefly his analysis of an extract from the subsection on reported dialogue. A woman relates a paranormal sighting. Here, first of all, is the extract:-

Extract 6.4 (Source Extract 25)

1 that night:
2 (1.5)
3 I don’t know what
4 time it was
5 (1.3)
6 my: husband (.) and I
7 both woke up: (.7)
8 with the mo:st (.)
9 dreadful (.5)
10 feeling of
11 (1.7)
12 hhh well being (nyrie)
13 smothered (.3) but the
14 powerful smell .h and
15 a blackness (.3) that ws
16 that was (.2) blacker than
17 black I can’ describe it
18 like (.) anything else
19 .hh it was the most
20 penetrating (.3) type of
21 blackness .hh
22 and there was this
Intersubjectivity is a notion which occupies a prime position in interpretative sociology. The achievement of the reciprocity of perspectives has been investigated by Schutz and Luckmann (1967). According to Schutz and Luckmann, two idealizations combine to form the basis of this reciprocity - the idealization of the interchangeability of standpoints and the idealization of the congruence of relevance systems. Schutz and Luckmann argue that, by means of these idealizations, problems of differing spatial locations and distinct relevance systems can be practically negotiated. Wooffitt states:

“In Schutz’s terms these presuppositions are implicit - incarnate in actual occasions of actors’ dealings with each other, and, thereby, are not available for inspection or scrutiny by participants”

(p. 184)

Wooffitt would prefer to regard Schutz’s idealizations as resources for participants. Edwards (1995b, p 586) too states:

“Intersubjectivity can be analysed as a practical conversational accomplishment managed by conversation’s ordinary procedures for turn-taking and repair”

Wooffitt explains that displaying the practical, publicly displayed, analytic, reasoning practices which were performed ‘in situ’ at the time of the exchange, on the sequential dialogue, does the job of making concrete the objectivity of the phenomena.

In this particular extract, the idealization of the interchangeability of standpoints is affirmed. The speaker’s reaction (lines 38 and 39) shows awareness of the same phenomenon as her husband (his reaction, line 35), despite different spatial locations. However, the idealization of the congruence of relevance systems is not affirmed. The relevance of the phenomenon is different for herself and her husband. By this interchange she constructs the phenomenon as real, as horrific on first sighting, as paranormal but she also constructs herself as an expert at dealing with such experiences and constructs this incident as being, for her personally, one in a series of such encounters.

A piece from my own data which involves a dialogue comes from Appendix NW2. Here, not only is the objectivity of the phenomenon constructed but also a formation of a mutual interpretation of it. As we shall see more clearly in Chapters 7 and 8, constructions of consensual interpretative orientations towards the world are important in knowledge construction, as well as constructions of objectivity. The extract is as follows:-

Extract 6.5 (Source AS/MP2)

627 Lena: [ I was talking to Alice
628
629 in the (.6) um library
630
631 this (.) USSR
632
633 ((uninterrupted sustained silent reading))
634
635 and (. ) and (we sai)
636
637 we were talking about
638
639 “what about if this theatre blew up
640
641 and set on fire
642
643 and (. ) the doors were all ↓locked (.)”
644
645 I said “we’ll have to break that glass
646
647 and get the ↑key”
648
649 ((she laughs and Eva joins in))
650
651 (1.0)
652
653 Eva: Umm
Teacher: Would that be easy to do?

Grant: Ye [h-

Lena: [ No

You could just-

645 o:h

get a chair probably

647 and jump up

648 [ (.6)

Andy: [ I would

650 ( [ . )

Lena: [ and smash it

651 Grant: Yeh

652 on a (.) on a programme once

653 Lena: Well

654 me and [ Alice s (.) said

655 “what about if my arm bleeds”

656 Andy: [ I don’t know

657 why they (say) smash it

658 Lena: and we said “we’ll kick it”

The utilization of the idealization of interchangeability of standpoints in this reported exchange can be identified by the deictic terms ‘this’ in line 633

633 “what about if this theatre blew up

and ‘that’ in line 636

636 I said “we’ll have to break that glass

The story Lena has to tell is not constructed as a real, but as an imaginary scenario. She constructs herself and Alice as potentially locked in a burning theatre. Lena mobilizes Schutz’s idealization of the interchangeability of standpoints to portray herself and Alice as maintaining identical situational positions, as relevant to the story.
Organization of Narrative Fact

Lena’s appeal to the idealization of the congruence of relevance systems displays its adoption as a process. Alice and herself arrive at a congruent position. The process is initiated in the repair over lines 631 and 632: -

631 and (...) and (we sai)
632 we were talking about

In this story the glass fire alarm has high profile. The teacher, prior to this extract, had been trying to convince the four children that glass is sometimes soft, with a reference to glass in the glass foundry. A series of narratives then centred around hard, brittle glass. The rest were presented as factual, but this one, as I have already pointed out, was presented as an imagined scenario.

From Lena’s position, the glass in this story is a lifesaver (lines 636 and 637): -

636 I said “we’ll have to break that glass
637 and get the key”

With Alice’s co-operation Lena subsequently becomes more wary of the glass: -

655 me and [ Alice s (...) said
656 “what about if my arm bleeds”

The two relevance positions are then compromised in line 659, each one maintaining its validity: -

659 Lena: and we said “we’ll kick it”

A display of intersubjectivity has been achieved, but the display of interchangeability of standpoints, happening in the story constructed as real rather than in the imaginary story, maintains the objectivity of the objects in the room. The objectivity of the objects is further assured because no relevance system is discounted. A compromise is reached.

By this display of the aligning of relevance positions, Lena can construct the knowledge being created as common knowledge; this is how people relevance glass, as
something breakable and potentially dangerous, not as something soft and runny. We can do logic on this fictional situation because of the general properties of glass. We know what it will do. Alice is present as a consensualizing agent. Non-specificity of time is achieved by the hypothetical nature of this story. Glass will always do these things. Universality of place is hinted at by the fluctuation of ‘library’ in line 628.

628 in the (.6) um library

into ‘theatre’ in line 633

629 “what about if this (. ) theatre blew up

both place-locating words having a pause in front of them, indicating careful selection.

There are differences in the functions of the story narrated in Wooffitt’s extract and my own. In my own extract, the function is to display a scientific point; i.e. that glass is hard. Consensus, universality of time and place, reciprocity of perspectives, replicability of experiments, mutual alignment to phenomena are all part of our discourse about science. Therefore a display of the congruency of relevance systems is important for that function. If uniformity were undermined, science would collapse.

The speaker in Wooffitt’s extract has quite another function to perform. She has to portray the experience as actually occurring but as unusual, not common knowledge, and not conforming to scientific principles. At the same time she has to illustrate that she is an expert in such experiences. The display of the incongruity of relevance systems in the dialogue with her husband is a useful device for the achievement of these latter functions. The first function, to maintain the objectivity of the phenomenon, is accomplished by a display of the interchangeability of locational standpoints.

Monologic Voicing in Displays of Intersubjectivity

One-sided voicings can also do much social business in a narrative portrayed as factual and experiential. Here they construct positive and negative identities and victimization. As intimated earlier, I make no apology for including this in a thesis on knowledge construction. Knowledge construction is a ‘way of talking’ and, if we study other factual narrative constructions, it will, hopefully, give us insight, constrastively, into what is at issue in experiential claims to knowledge.
Organization of Narrative Fact

In this subsection my own data will be submitted first, as it provides the larger context in which the displays of intersubjectivity arise. Unlike my fire alarm data, displayed in the last subsection, this was not produced in the context of knowledge construction. This is an e-mail from an eighteen-year-old boy at university to his dad. The e-mail was dispatched at the end of April, 1996. (For a discussion about written data, refer to the conclusion at the end of Chapter 4. E-mail is slightly different from the written data presented there, as it has to attend to a potential immediate challenge [hence the elaboration of this piece], although only after its turn is completed). Oasis and Manic Street Preachers were popular music bands at the time and the boy’s parents had shown great concern, prior to his departure, about his attendance at this ‘gig’.

Extract 6.6 (Source AS/Private Communication)

1  Hi,
2  Oasis were amazing,
3  as were Manic Street preachers.
4  The whole gig went smoothly
5  and was very enjoyable.
6  However afterwards
7  (don’t tell mum she will worry)
8  2 kids, about 16 and 14
9  tried to mug Reg
10  while we were waiting for the bus.
11  The reason being he was sitting down
12  away from the group.
13  However when we realised
14  what was going on
15  we went up
16  and they said
17  “Right you can all give us your wallets”
18  in a rather unconvincing, almost worried way.
19  It was obvious they did not realize
20  there was a group of 9 of us
21  when they started,
22  each one of us stone cold sober.
I was a bit worried
they might pull a knife
until the 14 year old one said
"You better give them to us
otherwise I will get out my piece
and blow you away."
After this we just walked quickly away,
seen as they almost definitely did not have a gun,
or even a knife,
and even if they did have a gun
the street was far too busy
to dare to fire it.
The larger one went to hit Neil
but only clipped him.
We were fine.
Neil and Reg were fairly shaken up,
but calmed down after about ten minutes.
Isn't Grass-edge a nice place!!
- Hear from you soon -
Pete.

(E-mail re-aligned and lines numbered)
The son, here, in recounting this encounter with two young teenagers, seems to be engaging in identity construction (displaying how he conducts himself in such an encounter) and reassurance (such encounters need not be that serious, anyhow; plus the message, ‘gigs’ are safe). He does this through fact construction and narrative.

Let us consider this question of reassurance first, before we look at the construction of identity, which is partially executed through this strategy of one-sided voicing.

There is a tension here. The situation has to be aligned to and identifiable as the one his parents anxiously envisage (for the sake of Pete’s self-identity construction) but, at the same time, toned down and modified (for the sake of reassuring the parents about the non-seriousness of such encounters). Thus, the use of the term ‘mug’ in line 9, but also the reference to:-
Organization of Narrative Fact

2 kids, about 16 and 14

The term ‘kids’ and their ages write them off as serious muggers. Line 7:

(don’t tell mum she will worry)

portrays mum as a worrier rather than the incident as being serious. This tension is also displayed at the end of narrative.

Neil and Reg were fairly shaken up,
but calmed down after about ten minutes.

The episode shook them up but not so much that a short period of time did not witness their recovery.

The parents had expressed their anxiety about their son attending a ‘gig’. The son portrays the attendance at the ‘gig’ as being unproblematic.

Oasis were amazing,
as were Manic Street preachers.
The whole gig went smoothly
and was very enjoyable.

The problem was ‘afterwards’ (line 6). The incident is divorced from the ‘gig’ itself. Line 40, too, divorces the incident from the ‘gig’

Isn’t Grass-edge a nice place!!

Grass-edge is the suburb of the city where the ‘gig’ took place. Grass-edge is blamed for the incident, not the ‘gig’, which is constructed as independent of its surroundings.

We have looked at the situation and the incident. Now let us look at how Pete constructs himself within that incident. He only voices the constructed assailants, not himself nor his friends (lines 17 and 26 to 28), and so constructs himself and his friends as victims, undergoing an unprovoked attack.
Widdicombe and Wooffitt (1989) have similar examples of this in their data relating to social identity in action, e.g. the following from an interview with a self-constructed punk:

Extract 6.7 (Source (4) [17: p.5] 8A: 2P: M/F)

1 S: All these people...
2 You’re walking down the street
3 and you -
4 the majority of them go
5 “Look at the state of them,
6 they’re black, they’re dirty
7 they’re smelly, they’re aggressive”
8 you know what I mean?

She constructs herself as the victim of verbal denigration. As an interactional resource to show there is nothing socially disparate about her attitude or behaviour, she engages in, what Sacks (1984) calls ‘doing being ordinary’.

2 You’re walking down the street

Pete, too, constructs himself and his friends as ‘doing being ordinary’.

10 while we were waiting for the bus.

They were not an intimidating gang and were doing nothing provocative or silly. They were even physically scattered until the incident was up and running.

11 The reason being he was sitting down
12 away from the group.

They were doing nothing untoward, in fact they were totally harmless and ordinary. They were the victims of verbal aggression.

Pete’s parents had also, on several occasions, shown an anxiety and concern that Pete should show moderation and control in alcohol consumption. He here attends
to the potential accusation that the encounter was a drunken brawl with guilt on both sides.

22 each one of us stone cold sober.

The story is a bit incredible if the two youngsters, aged fourteen and sixteen, had realized they were attacking a group of nine sober eighteen to twenty-year-olds. However, Pete constructs them as not realizing this until it was too late.

19 It was obvious they did not realise
20 there was a group of 9 of us when they started,

Pete's and his friends' actions are portrayed as responsible. They protected a friend.

13 However when we realised
14 what was going on
15 we went up

They removed themselves from danger:-

29 After this we just walked quickly away,

Pete portrays himself as a thinking, consequential person:-

23 I was a bit worried
24 they might pull a knife

and

29 After this we just walked quickly away,
30 seen as they almost definitely did not have a gun,
31 or even a knife,
Organization of Narrative Fact

32 and even if they did have a gun
33 the street was far too busy
34 to dare to fire it.

The occurrence ended with another uncalled-for burst of aggression.

35 The larger one went to hit Neil
36 but only clipped him.
37 We were fine.

They were fine because the situation was not too serious and they had acted responsibly. Line 37 also helps to construct Pete and company as non-aggressors. One does not inquire into the state of health of instigators of fights. They have got what they deserve, their come-uppence, etc. Pete and friends, as victims, could declare they were fine, but if, in an e-mail, he had constructed himself as a fight-instigator and declared he was fine, normatively he could have expected some retorts.

We can, therefore, hopefully see here how monologic voicing, as an example of factual devices performing 'in situ' social acts (in this instance, amongst other things, in connection with identity construction), sets the scene, in this case, a portrayal of victimization.

Contrast Structures in the Construction of Dispositional Traits

My last example from the research of another is taken from a seminal, highly influential work by Dorothy Smith. Smith (1978) gives voluminous, accumulative incidences of how the mental illness of an individual ‘K’ is constructed by narrative stories which pose as fact. One of Smith’s students interviewed friends of ‘K’ for a written university assignment. Smith ignores the discursivity of the assignment. However, she does adopt a relativist stance towards the stories themselves.

"Whether ‘K’ was really mentally ill or not is irrelevant to the analysis.” (p. 28) She does furnish us with another version of events, namely that ‘K’ was being ostracized by her ‘friends’. In the interviews the friends have gone to great lengths to display that they were well-intentioned and kindly towards ‘K’ and that they were not collusive in their arrival at conclusions about her mental illness. Decisions were independently reached.
I am just going to present three lines from these stories about ‘K’. This is part of a story by a fellow student, Angela, and shows how constrast structures in stories can have the effect of making behaviour seem abnormal.

Extract 6.8 (Source Smith: 1990: 18)

21 We would go to the beach or the pool on a hot day,
22 and I would sort of dip in and just lie in the sun,
23 while K insisted that she had to swim 30 lengths.

I have re-arranged the line content a little to display better the contrast structures.

Angela presents her own actions as normal and sane, while ‘K’ contrastively performs abnormal and neurotic actions. We could, however, imagine the actions reversed and ‘K’ still depicted as being the mentally-ill one out of the pair. Consider

21 We would go to the beach or the pool on a hot day,
22 and I would sort of just swim 30 lengths,
23 while K insisted that she had to dip in and lie in the sun.

There is really not that much intrinsic to the actions themselves that makes them abnormal.

We are always left with an obsessional portrayal of the mentality of ‘K’ - her insistence (line 23) and her feelings of being compelled, having no control over her actions - ‘she had to’ (line 23). Contrastively we have the nonchalance of Angela, relayed by the words ‘would’, ‘sort of’ and ‘just’.

My own data contain a construction of a dispositional trait, i.e. naughtiness. This comes from Appendix MP6. The teacher and the four children are discussing material properties. Lena tells a tale of how she, her brother and two of her cousins were on their way to a pantomime.

Extract 6.9 (Source AS/MP6). Presented in four parts.

815 Lena: You see we were (.) going to a pantomime
816 (.) umm it (was) called Aladdin (.8)

One of the cousins was apparently a naughty person:-
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I had this naughty cousin.

A piece of fact discourse exemplifies his naughtiness:

Henriques locked the doors and shut slammed them together so we couldn't get the keys out.

The contrast structure occurs in line 838. The other children are just eager to follow procedure and arrive at the pantomime.

The ambiguity over whether line 838 is a purpose or a result clause serves a dual function. A purpose clause helps construct Henriques' motivation and his naughtiness is established. A result clause aids Lena in explaining how the keys were trapped inside the car, thus necessitating the smashing of the glass.

Lena: so this (.) firemen had to come and smash (.4) all the windows to try and get the key.

Dorothy Smith's 'mental illness' constructions apparently serve no function beyond establishing that 'K' is mentally ill. Here the cousin's 'naughtiness' is being constructed in a knowledge context and helps to veer the story in a direction which can adequately prove to us that glass is hard, not soft as the teacher, offering the glass in the glass foundry as an example, is maintaining. It is open to participants to defend polarized dichotomized positions in talk, as well as to reach a compromise by appealing to time, place variabilities, etc. In common-sense understanding, many theories in science are viewed as mutually exclusive and not open to compromise.

As with Dorothy Smith's 'facts' about the visits to the beach or pool, another version of events could be conjured up - that Henriques was trying to be helpful by
locking all the car doors and that messing around with the car keys, or having the intention to do so, was the naughty act. Notice there is no adult in the story, not even a driver. Lena, her brother and one of her cousins are the sensible, responsible personages.

Why does Lena go to these lengths to construct naughtiness, when the story could easily have centred around an accidental locking-in of the keys? If we look at the prior story by Eva (Appendix MP5), perhaps we have the answer:-

Extract 6.10 (Source AS/MP5)

795 Eva: When we (. ) my mum [ left the keys
796 in the car (. 8) um

No construction of naughtiness on mum’s part here; an accidental action leaves the keys in the car. Lena’s variants of person, mental disposition, etc. make her story more credible as a piece of ‘real’ life, less fabricated, than if she had rigidly adhered to the story format set by Eva. More of this legitimation of experiences in the next chapter.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have focused on narrative fact organization to prepare us for our involvement with the legitimation of experiential claims in the next chapter. We have looked at various specific structural devices that organize fact discourse and, through that, achieve social business. We have seen how consensus in social remembering establishes the remembered events as fact and thus convinces us that an accurate representation of ‘what actually happened’ is being submitted, or, at least, a commonly interpreted version for all the participants. We have also seen how dialogic and monologic voicings in fact discourse can transmit messages about intersubjectivity and hence about objectivity, differential experiencings and identity. We have seen how mental and dispositional states can be depicted by sketching the behaviours of people in certain settings by means of factual narrative stories, thus hinting at motivation, disinterestedness, attitudes towards people and other components of those states. Contrast behaviours can underline these behaviours as abnormal or deviant.

Here I have illustrated the discourse of factual reporting by focusing on several examples of fact-accomplishing devices. These examples are not an exhaustive set, nor a generalized theory of how factual discourse works (see the DAM - discourse action
model developed by Edwards and Potter, 1992a, for such a generalized theory, reproduced at the beginning of this chapter).

We shall now, in Chapter 7, move on, more specifically, to experiential claims in knowledge-construction settings. We shall examine how such experiential claims are legitimated.
CHAPTER SEVEN
THE LEGITIMATION OF EXPERIENTIAL CLAIMS

We have seen in Chapters 4 and 5 how the experience invoked to substantiate a knowledge claim is introduced through the construction of a credit-worthy person with whom the teller has often relational ties - a specific personal dimension. We also saw in those chapters how experiences were sometimes invoked as being universal, available equally to all or, at least, to large sections of humanity. Consensus as to the interpretation of experiences is implied to authorize the legitimacy of those experiences. (As in Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1971, a 'universal audience' would empathize with the experiences and understand them.) Thus, we have available to us the interpretation of credit-worthy individuals and/or the interpretation of the populace as a whole or, at least, the populace of that contextual situation. As we saw in Chapter 3, all this takes place in knowledge-construction contexts, where inferences have to be attended to, accountabilities addressed, potential criticisms answered, etc. As Edwards (1994a, p. 217) states:-

“We must never take our eyes off the rhetorical nature of constructions.”

In this chapter, having been afforded in Chapter 6 an insight into how to analyse narrative fact constructions, we shall look more closely at the uttered experience and see, among other constructions, how the experience is upheld as an object out-there, divorced from the present context and the present teller's interpretations. I have already provided some intimations of this in previous chapters. At the end of the chapter I hope that I will have shown that the interpretation of experiences and the objectivity of experiences are not opposites but work together to authenticate experiences.

Sometimes, when I use the word ‘reality’, I shall insert it in inverted commas; at other times I shall omit them. It makes little difference except in the most crucial sense of all, the contextual rhetoric. In absolute terms it is much of a muchness. The problem with the insertion of inverted commas is that it can imply an (in discourse terms) artificial reality to that which is outside of them.

Experiential claims in knowledge-construction contexts, when dealing with the construction of the actual experience, must deal with issues that not all fact construction need address. Our view of knowledge is that it is universally available, ‘real’, consistent, etc. Appeals can be made to the following ‘shared knowledge’
positions on science (Edwards, 1997, Chapter 5, defines ‘shared knowledge’ as ‘a participants’ practical concern: what their talk treats as shared, and when, and how.’ [p. 114]): 1) Knowledge is externally available, out in a consistent ‘real’ world. 2) In this ‘real’ world events follow a logically understood, often causal pattern. 3) People act understandably, as individuals. 4) People, as social beings, can relate to each other and each other’s experiences. 5) Language structures can be a conformist reflector of ‘reality’. This is not an exhaustive list. It is given just to afford the reader a flavour of potential pertinent issues. These ‘shared knowledge’ positions, once constructed, are not indisputable, as we shall discover in Chapter 8. For example, as will be seen in Chapter 8, language as a reflector of reality can be undermined by the introduction of the stake or motive of the teller. Such underminings can serve to destroy knowledge claims.

After showing how prior constructions of identity and relevance are maintained in the narration of the experience, I shall examine how these appeals are made, not necessarily in the order above.

Before we look at the construction of the objectivity of the experience and other issues, let us first consider how that which we have already studied, i.e. the interpretation of the experience, is kept alive throughout the narration of the experience and not divorced from the objectivity aspect.

**Maintenance of Constructs**

**Identity Maintained**

In the following extract (from Appendix MP1), which we have already encountered in a fuller version, Eva constantly reminds the listener that this is her mum’s experience, not hers. Eva nominates her mum as having visited a glass foundry.

Extract 7.1 (Source AS/MP1)

595 Eva: My mum has and she (. ) [ this man
* * * * * * * * * *
598 Eva: [ he got [ he he
* * * * * * * * * *
601 Eva: they made this <lovely um glass jar
602 or something
603 and he just picked it up>
Eva displays uncertainty as to the identity of the glassblower with the words ‘this man’ after a pause on line 595. She further clouds his identity in line 601:

601 Eva: they made this < lovely um glass jar

The contrast between ‘My mum’, a special specific person, and ‘this man’, it does not really matter who, (both on line 595), relays to listeners that these experiences belong to the mum, not to the man.

The object of his attentions is also rendered indistinct:

601 Eva: * * * < lovely um glass jar
602 or something

Eva is also not in tune with the glassblower’s motivations and intentions. It was a ‘lovely’ (line 601) jar and yet he smashes it. She can only vaguely guess at the reason for this:

604 whether there was a bubble in it
605 or something

In this way she maintains the experience as not belonging to her, but belonging to a more dependable adult. It is a way of saying that she is giving the gist, the basic facts of her mum’s experience, without being in a position to fill in all the details. These kinds of discourse devices are what give Eva’s story the character of a second-hand, but still valid, experiential report.

As well as links having to be maintained with the identity of the experiencer, the relevance of the experience to the knowledge context in which it is found has often to be maintained.
Legitimation of Experiential Claims

*Relevance Maintained*

Sometimes the knowledge gained from the experience can be explicitly stated as coming from the experience in a kind of syllogistic fashion (or, in this case, the lack of knowledge from the lack of experience). Thus the knowledge and the experience are made relevant to each other. This data comes from Appendix MP8.

Extract 7.2 (Source AS/MP8)

A

1 Is Plastic soft?
2 Well
3 I don't know
4 cos I've never tried before
5 so I don't think Plastic is soft.

(Written data, therefore submitted as presented.)

The hardness of plastic seems to be a default setting here because of the question's being

1 Is Plastic soft?

Without experience (line 4) you cannot discover the softness of plastic and therefore (line 5) plastic is hard. I am not ridiculing this position. It is just an example of our ways of talking which shows us, more obviously than most, the rhetoric involved.

The next extract occurs in the knowledge context which we have already encountered, a scientific discussion about how substantive shadows are. There is a tension here between the two-ness of the identical girls in the fictional story that ensues and the oneness in scientific terms of a person and his/her shadow. In this part of the story the insubstantiveness of the second girl is re-affirmed; the story brought back into line to endorse the scientific version of the nature of shadows. This data comes from Appendix TS5.

Extract 7.3 (Source AS/TS5)

971 Lena: and (.6) and (.7) at sunset
972 the (.8) nasty girl disappeared

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973 'cos that was just the pretend one (.)
974 the nice one was still there hh.
975 Teacher: She was the one with the shadow (.)
976 the nice one?
977 Lena: [ Yeh
978 Grant: [ Um- and the bad (.4)
979 [ and the (horrible) one
980 Lena: [ and the shadow was the [ horrible one
981 Andy: [ When the bad one
982 um (.4)
983 when the bad one disappeared
984 at sunset (.)
985 um
986 the lady came out again
987 (>went in the< cupboard for a spoon)
988 and um (.)
989 when she saw her disappear
990 she screamed again
991 and she (had a) shopping basket
992 and she ran all the way
993 down the lane

The insubstantiveness of the second girl is displayed by her disappearance (line 972), a point Andy re-affirms twice (lines 983 and 989). The second girl is alluded to as a shadow again (lines 975 and 980). The point is made that she is a 'pretend' character (line 973). Her credibility as an independent individual wanes.

Appeals to the Existence of an External 'Reality'

We shall now leave these issues of identity maintenance and relevancy maintenance and proceed to the means whereby experience is made an object, not person-dependent, just part of the world which we inherit. Potter, Edwards and Wetherell (1993) have this to say about this issue of out-there-ness.

"To successfully manage the dilemma of stake or interest via a factual version, it is necessary to produce a version that can actually be accepted as factual or at
least one that is rhetorically organized in such a manner that it is difficult to undermine or rebut. Thus we can study the procedures that people use to construct their versions as ‘factual’; that is, external to the speaker and their desires and concerns (DAM Point 5). How, in other words, are factual accounts given out-there-ness (Smith, 1990; Wooffitt, 1992; Woolgar, 1988)?” (p. 393)

See Chapter 6 of this thesis for a perusal of the Discourse Action Model (or DAM for short).

Voicings, sound constructions, visual constructions and number constructions and other devices which we shall examine give indications that a detailed, precise, external out-there-ness is at issue and the removal of personal agency re-enforces the notion of an external objectivity.

**Voicings**

We have seen in this thesis already many instances where voices enter the narrative. The exact words of an utterance give the tale an authenticity that is difficult to dispute. The listener is positioned within the story, surveying the action at first hand. In the story mentioned previously about the shadow-girl (Appendix TS5), the girl is voiced:-

Extract 7.4 (Source AS/TS5)

884 and she said “I don’t like this (dinner)”

and

887 >and said “I’m not eating it”

As well as the tale becoming authentic because of the voicing, giving the incident an immediacy which is difficult to dispute, the stubbornness and naughtiness of the character with all her uncompromising nature come across to the listener too.

See also the Number Constructions subsection for another instance of voicing.

**Sound Constructions**

Sound effects too lend to a story an ‘experienced’ genuineness it might otherwise lack. I have produced without comment a piece of data containing one already in this chapter (Appendix MP1).
The ‘zhoom’ on line 607 brings us back to being there, at the glassmaking, after many lines of being distanced from the experience, while the experience was being classed as the mother’s, not Eva’s. Eva suddenly attends to making the experience ‘real’ and immediate to ward off criticisms that she knows nothing experiential about the events she is narrating. If we view this extract as sequential, situated talk, produced to legitimate the experience, it all makes sense. If we view the extract as constructing and endorsing both the subjective interpretation of the experience by the mother and the objectivity of the experience, both at the same time, and we make no allowance, in our analysis, for talk and performative business, it all appears paradoxical. Our common-sense knowledge dichotomizes subjectivity and objectivity; the enhancing of one downgrades the other; so our common-sense knowledge tells us.

In this next extract from FD2, where the four family members are discussing the Christmas Lecture, Mum shows interest in the research orientation of the Christmas lecturer and asks whether the piece of work the lecturer was describing was part of his research programme.

Extract 7.5 (Source AS/FD2)
Legitimation of Experiential Claims

[ < based on some work that he’d done (.)
years ] (before) >

1740 Pete: [ thirty years ago]

1741 Ken: [ this other bloke

1742 Mum: ↓Y↓e:h

1743 Ken: in (.) errm (.) err

1744 Mum: ↑h↓e’d (.)

1745 < the bloke

1746 [ had told him in a concert in Paris ]>

1747 Pete: [ So

1748 Pete: what was his area of research?

1750 Ken: [ lovely did did did dio

1751 Pete: ( [ ]

1752 Ken: [ lovely ] did did

In voicing the sound effects of the orchestra (lines 1752 and 1754), the boys lend the experience more credibility. Throughout the extract they are engaging in a collaboratively produced output (see Sacks, 1992, Vol. 1, Part 2, Lecture 3, pp. 144 to 149. Also see Chapter 5 of this thesis for more explanation of this.) The contrary position that has to be countered by the boys is Mum’s insinuated avowal of the involvement of the Christmas lecturer in this piece of research under discussion, whereas the boys are assigning the research to ‘this other bloke’ (line 1741) and portray vividly the transfer of information from ‘this other bloke’ to the lecturer.

Visual Constructions

As well as being allowed a vivid representation of the sounds of the experience to portray its reality, we are often afforded a graphic visual picture. Consider the following extract. In Clive Anderson’s television programme, Jessica, the zoologist, is rebutting Clive’s assertion that zebras are extremely conspicuous and do not camouflage easily. They are contemplating a picture of a zebra.
Legitimation of Experiential Claims

Extract 7.6 (Source AS/CA2)

172 Jessica: [ If you look at a zebra (. )
173 If you look at a zebra like that
174 or a [ zebra in a zoo
175 Clive: [ Yeh
176 Jessica: then yeh it's really easy to see.
177 Clive: [ Yeh
178 Jessica: [ (if) you look at a zebra
179 out on the plains in Africa
180 against that shimmering heat haze
181 Clive: Yeh
182 Jessica: it almost disappears [ because it's ( )

With the words ‘shimmering heat haze’ (line 180), Jessica takes the listener out onto the plains of Africa. This is, of course, an effect novelists, travel writers, ethnographers, etc. often try and capture. The out-breaths of the ‘h’ sound throughout the three words gives an impression of the effect of the heat - panting. The gradual lengthening of the vowel from ‘i’ to ‘ea’ to ‘a.e’ (another onomatopoeiac effect) gives an impression of being overcome by heat. At this point in analysis, of course, I have stepped away from discourse and conversation analysis and am rather engaging in poetic analysis, poetics. (Sacks, 1992, sometimes deals with poetics in his lectures).

Let us now return to Appendix TS 10 and the data about snake-tasting. Lena has described a snake-eating incident from a film.

Extract 7.7 (Source AS/TS10)

1342 Grant: [ I hope
1343 it wasn’t poisonous ( )°
1344 (.4)
1345 Lena: ↑N↓o:
1346 it wasn’t poisonous
1347 It was sort of (.2) turquoise (.)
1348 the colour of turquoise.
If we view Lena’s remark on lines 1347 and 1348 as merely a reply to the prompt on lines 1342 to 1344, the interchange does not make any sense - turquoise does not contradict poisonous. If, however, we view Lena’s input as attending to potential underminings of her claim about the existence of the snake-eating incident on the film, it becomes clear how it occurs. From our conversation-analytic perspective we are not obliged to feel that Lena considers turquoise snakes innoxious. Previously she has been concentrating on making a snapshot of time vivid and ‘real’.

Extract 7.8 (Source AS/TS10)

1327 Lena: ‘cos there was on this film
1328 and somebody said (.4) um
1329 “I’m hungry”
1330 and they saw this snake’s liver
1331 and ate them
1332 and (.4) they picked it up
1333 and stabbed it
1334 and (.4) they cut it
1335 in lots of pieces
1336 and started eating it

This reality-construction produces a desired effect:-

1337 Child: [ ^U↓ggh

This story is meant to back up a general supposition that snakes can be eaten, so Lena is not eager for her characters to be poisoned. (I do not use words such as ‘eagerness’, ‘intention’, ‘desire’, etc. with any intention -!- of constructing attitudes of mind prior to the discourse. The words I use are ‘ways of talking’.) This is the point at which Lena comes around to the claim that snakes can be eaten.
Legitimation of Experiential Claims

Extract 7.9 (Source AS/TS10)

1322 Lena: I don’t know-
1323 I wouldn’t want to
1324 but you can.

Also, the destruction by poisoning of these two characters would be outside the confines of this particular snapshot. One would have to monitor the two characters beyond Lena’s carefully constructed scenario to discover whether the snake-eating had been detrimental to their health. This would reduce its rhetorical effectiveness. Lena, in her snapshot, has constructed snake-eating as feasible, but not desirable (line 1323) and not a common occurrence. Her story is effective because it deals with an unusual, eccentric happening. Although she does not want to detract from the feasibility of the described event, she is at pains not to turn her story into just the story of two people having a meal. Her lines (from Extract 7.7):

1347 It was sort of (.2) turquoise (.)
1348 the colour of turquoise.

has, at least, three effects. First, it keeps the scenario riveted to the gruesome occurrence; secondly, it reminds the listener of the framing of the story (see Goffman, 1981) - a film presumably in colour; and thirdly the turquoise food imparts to this particular act of eating a unique, uncommon quality. The two-tenths of a second pause and the stress on the initial part of the word ‘turquoise’ display care with the choosing of this word.

Number Constructions
As well as sound and visual constructions, the precision and exactitude of numbers can also impart a credible immediacy to the described experience. Take the following example. Clive Anderson, on his television programme, is introducing Jessica to the topic of the allegedly short memories of goldfish.
Clive introduces an experiential claim on line 258 which continues to line 261. The experiential claim boosts his knowledge claim that people proclaim that goldfish have short memories. In this extract Clive is removing himself very much from the knowledge claim, that goldfish have short memories, in a way that is typical of news reporting (see Clayman, 1992). He maintains neutrality. The device ‘alleged’, on line 256, is used, often and ironically, on television programmes in the mould of ‘Have I Got News for You’ to avoid accusations of slander.

A behavioural experiment, involving a goldfish, is in the offing to prove or disprove the theory. Clive, as the constructed programme presenter and perhaps even topic initiator, has to display that this subject is of public appeal and interest. He has no constructed stake in the outcome of the experiment, only the accountability to satisfy public curiosity. He voices the populace (‘lots of people’, line 258) expressing curiosity and guessing at the short period of experiential time that goldfish memories are able to contain.

These three lines place us with the general populace and their dilemma; the lines give us a sense that the public curiosity is ‘real’. They also, however, provide more justification for the conducting of the experiment. If the experiment shows that goldfish have short memories, everyone could turn round and say, “But we knew that already”.

259 >oh (but) goldfish have a memory of<
260 two seconds
261 or five seconds (.)
(now it is my turn to do voicing). Clive constructs the public knowledge as being incomplete and therefore gives a sense that the experiment is worthwhile.

Jessica, the expert, is there to confound popular opinion, to 'shatter some of the myths’ (AS/CA end; lines 606 and 607, not verbatim). She takes up the numbers game initiated by Clive.

Extract 7.11 (Source AS/CA3)

272 Jessica: I’ve also read the thing
273 about goldfish
274 only having five second memories
275 and it would be pretty miserable
276 considering (.)
277 if that thing survives * * *
278 * * * * * * * * *
280 Jessica: um it could actually live
281 ’til it’s forty years old.
282 Goldfish are incredibly long lived animals
283 cared for properly
284 I mean something like a Koi carp
285 which is related to goldfish
286 can live f
287 the the longest recorded one
288 was two hundred and twenty six years old
289 looked after by seven generations
290 of the same family.
291 Now if you could only remem [ber

Now the knowledge is no longer common knowledge but knowledge of the author of a single written article, disparagingly dismissed by Jessica.

272 Jessica: I’ve also read the thing

After the repair of a self (Jessica)-initiated knowledge claim (on line 286).
Jessica, as the academic, produces recorded evidence of Koi carp longevity:-

- the longest recorded one
- was two hundred and twenty six years old
- looked after by seven generations
- of the same family.

The care, the precision, the exactitude of the scientist are displayed by the number presentations, as opposed to the sloppy, opinionated thinking of the author of ‘the thing’ (line 272).

Jessica presents her knowledge claims as to do with longevity of goldfish and the related Koi carp, not goldfish memory. She appeals to common reasoning to make the jump from long life to long memory:-

- and it would be pretty miserable
- considering (.)
- * * * * * * * * * * *
- Jessica: um it could actually live
- 'til it’s forty years old.

and, in line 291,

Jessica: Now if you could only remem [ber

Jessica, with the use of ‘you’ appeals to the empathy we, as humans, must share with goldfish as another living species (see the subsection on Intersubjectivity and Social Interaction).

Jessica, along the way, has endowed herself with opt-outs from a potential situation wherein the experiment disproves that goldfish have long memories. The opt-outs are notably lines 277
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277 if that thing survives \textit{tonight}

and 283

283 cared for properly

This particular goldfish has been so terrorized by Jessica’s dog that it is reduced to ‘a thing’ (line 277) and is in danger of non-survival. Perhaps it can no longer represent adequately goldfish-kind. Jessica does indeed need this escape route.

I hope it has been evident throughout this subsection that numbers can do a lot more than just give a sense of objectivity to the claim (and this is also the case with voicings, sound constructions and visual constructions). A further study of the surrounding context is necessary to appreciate fully the functions being performed. Otherwise, we may be led to the conclusion that only one social action can be carried out with these effects. Just to stress that we cannot correlate one discursive feature with one social action, I shall return to this topic of numbers in the subsection in this chapter on Intersubjectivity and Social Interaction.

Separation from the Personal

In experiential claims the speaker has to display that the experience ‘just happened’ that he/she had no stake in what occurred - see Potter, Edwards and Wetherell (1993; p. 393), already quoted.

I would now like to scrutinize more closely the withholding or removal of the person’s interest from the career of the story. As with all the other subsections, this is not an exhaustive set of devices that I proffer. I leave it to the tenacity and perseverance of the reader to ferret out more.

First, we shall deal with the framing of the tale. In Chapter 4, I mentioned framing (Goffman, 1981) and second stories (Sacks, 1992, Vol. 1, pp. 764 to 772). The watching of television or films is culturally constructed as a passive experience, so many stories are delivered within that framework. We have met all of the following extracts previously. Jessica, the zoologist in the Clive Anderson show, tells of passively watching the interaction between an elephant and a television presenter. At the beginning of her story, she sets the scene, placing herself apart from the action.
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Extract 7.12 (Source AS/CA6)

569 Jessica: but I once watched a television presenter

Lena, too, in narrating the story of an excerpt of a television serial, sets the ambience of television viewing, this time communal viewing, the communality constructed through the word ‘you’ (line 842). The verb is in the present tense so that the onus to become knowledgeable through experience is with the listener. The opportunity to experience that which Lena has experienced is still open to all:-

Extract 7.13 (Source AS/TS3)

841 Lena: [ Well
842 if you watch (.) um
843 The Return of the Psammead (.) um

Lena even ends her story with a cliff-hanger, implying that not only does she have no control over this story, she and every other viewer are ignorant of the complete tale.

Extract 7.14 (Source AS/TS3)

922 Lena: and they (.)
923 (>and we<) don’t know what’s going to happen
924 ‘cos that’s going to be next Wednesday.

Lena, again, in portraying an incident of snake-eating, constructs the action as part of a film, well removed from her influence, control or stake.

Extract 7.15 (Source AS/TS10)

1327 Lena: ’cos there was on this film

We shall now move away from the framing of the narrative and, in my next-but-one extract, which involves a sequence containing a repair, we can see how the narrator (the teacher) removes herself from the subject-position in connection with the verb ‘skidded’ (line 96) and puts in her place, as subject, inanimate objects ‘wheels’
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(line 98). As we shall see when we look at motivation and discuss ‘water snakes’, subject-verb constructions can imply agency and intention.

Extract 7.16 (Source AS/TS8)

1158 and they go in the water

In the extract presently under discussion, the teacher is introducing a second lesson on frictional properties, justifying the conclusions of the class in the previous lesson that ice was low in these frictional qualities, displaying linkage between classroom knowledge and the outside world, and creating curricular bonds between lessons.

Extract 7.17 (Source AS/F3)

96 I skidded on the ice (.)
97 about twice (.)
98 my wheels just skidded over the ice

The first line of the extract:-

96 I skidded on the ice (.)

with the emphases, endows us, as listeners, with a sense of the causal linkage between the ice and the skidding. Line 97:-

97 about twice (.)

assures us that the occurrence was not pure coincidence. Line 98:-

98 my wheels just skidded over the ice

removes the agency and personal stake of the teacher from the episode. ‘Wheels’ is the sentence subject rather than ‘I’; ‘just’ implies without any other cause besides the lack of friction, e.g. the teacher’s driving too fast, etc.

The word ‘just’, that we have just encountered in line 98 of the car-skidding narration, together with other ‘reality-constructing words’ such as ‘real’, ‘really’,
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‘actually’, etc. can bestow on a happening, or the state of a phenomenon, a sense of inevitability and ordainedness. You will meet these words in the next few extracts, where the children are discussing how the senses respond to a rainbow. In Extract 7.18, Eva is disputing the suggestion that you can climb up a rainbow. It is the ‘up’ which seems to be problematic for her, not the ‘climb’. The other extracts about the rainbow, Extracts 7.19 and 7.20, are self-explanatory.

Extract 7.18 (Source AS/TS1)

532 Eva: [ No you can’t
533 because it’s actually ] a circle.

Extract 7.19 (Source AS/TS1)

564 Andy: I don’t know
565 whether you could touch a rainbow
566 because I think it’s one of those things
567 that your hand’ll go right through.
568 Eva: [ Ye(s) .]
569 it’s just sort of like .
570 red
571 Grant: [ Yeh
572 Eva: it’s just
573 Grant: Yeh
574 it’s just the air different ↑colours. (.)
575 (It’s) re(. ) [flecting ( ) the rainbow.
576 Eva: [ It’s (. ) just the (. )
577 It’s just the sun (. ) um (. )
578 the sun’s rays getting separated
579 into all the colours.

Extract 7.20 (Source AS/TS2)

631 It’s (. ) not really anything at all really
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632 it's just a reflection.
633 a reflection.
634 like a reflection in the water.

By categorizing these words as 'reality-constructing words', I hope I do not convey the impression that you can always assume they are functioning thus, without a referral to context.

In Extract 7.21, Lena is trying to guess how the illusion is created, in enactments of the Borrowers’ stories, that these people are little.

Extract 7.21 (Source AS/TS6)

1010 you’d get lots of people
1011 dressing um (.).
1012 inside (in) a thing
1013 and- (.2)
1014 and there’s just a really big cover
1015 and you put them inside there
1016 and they just walk around (.)
1017 and real people are little.
1018 (1.0)

She constructs a reality/perception dichotomy. The reality is that the actors are put inside an outsize backdrop (lines 1110 to 1016); the perception (line 1017) is that ordinary people appear small. Perception is downgraded. We are deceived. It is not an ordinary set with undersized people. To convince us of the reality of the cover, Lena uses words ‘just’ and ‘really’ (line 1014):-

1014 and there’s just a really big cover

On line 1016, the word ‘just’ is used to describe the ordinariness of the actors’ actions.

1016 and they just walk around (.).
In the line, which deals with deceptive perception (line 1017), Lena pauses before her careful emphasizing of the initial letter of 'real':-

1017 and (.) real people are little.

In the preceding lines she has constructed these people as real and given an account, an explanation of why they seem little. This is something we have not encountered in our other examples - selective reality. Lena produces this utterance in a context of potential criticism regarding her lack of a scientific attitude in her recounting of the television story, 'The Return of the Psammead', within which story there were two identical girls. There have been insinuations that one should be questioning how the illusion of the two girls came about. This story was generated, if you remember, within a scientific discussion about the substantiveness of shadows. The scientific orientation of the other participants can be evidenced in these following extracts. First of all, the teacher's orientation:-

Extract 7.22 (Source AS/TS4)

925 Teacher: So that's all imagination?
926 People [ (. ) couldn't really not have shadows?

and

Extract 7.23 (Source AS/TS4)

966 Teacher: Is that some trick of the cameras (. )
967 that they do that?

Next, Grant's:-

Extract 7.24 (Source AS/TS4)

930 Grant: It's just an (. 2)
931 It >was< probably (err)
932 just a: (.4) [ an illusion.
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Notice the terms ‘really’ in the teacher’s contribution and ‘just’ in Grant’s (lines 930 and 932). We shall also see ‘just’ in this next extract from Andy:-

Extract 7.25 (Source AS/TS4)

939 Andy: it’s just the same girl (. )
940 (and) they take different photos (. )
941 of her acting like (naughty) ( )

Next, a contribution from Eva, also with ‘just’ (line 948):-

Extract 7.26 (Source AS/TS4)

947 Eva: (They think) (. )
948 (They just get) (. )
949 They do (They take) (.4) photos first.
952 Eva: and then (they) somehow run them together

So, Lena, in Extract 7.21, is displaying, in the light of potential criticism, her scientific orientation to events and, thereby, introduces the reality/perception dichotomy.

See the paragraphs later on body language for more examples of the insertions of ‘reality-constructing words’.

My penultimate example in this subsection, which has concerned itself with displays of the lack of personal manipulation in experiences, serves to illustrate how the psychology of the experiencer can be portrayed as affected by the experience in a way that it would not have been if the experiencer had somehow engineered the experience.

Extract 7.27 (Source AS/MP7)

935 Teacher: Sometimes you get a shock though
936 ↑↓don’t you
937 something’s hard
In my example the teacher creates a dichotomy of perception (or opinion) against reality, in much the same way as we saw Lena doing with the Borrowers’ scenario. Reality is something independent of, and overriding opinion or perception and you get ‘a shock’ (line 935) when you encounter reality after you have been deluded by your opinions and perceptions.

We come to the last example now in this ‘separation from the personal’ subsection. Body language, paralinguistic gestures, embodiment, etc. are terms that are extremely prevalent in certain areas of the social sciences today. The body as a container, as a boundaried entity (see Sampson, pp. 34 to 41), is a common metaphor in our society today. We have already met the experiential realism of Lakoff (1987) which relies on this metaphor.

Most social scientists would regard body language as separate from verbal language but, in the following example, we shall see references to bodily positions accomplishing passivity on the part of the experiencer, just as, in our last example, a reference to the state of mind of the experiencer accomplished the same effect.

We shall also meet our first example in the subsection on Logic. Eva tells us of her first encounter with the television programme ‘Jim’ll Fix It’.

Extract 7.28 (Source AS/TS7)

1090  Eva: Oh yeh quite
1091    ’cos-
1092    (.6)
1093    ’cos (. ) I just sat down watching it (. )
1094    ’cos (. ) my grandma doesn’t have a video:
1095    (.6)
1096    so I just sat down
1097    watching whatever was to on
1098    (.6)
1099    “Jim’ll Fix It”
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We have already discussed the effective framing and implications of passivity involved in television viewing but the reference to the sitting down and being confronted by the programmes in line 1093 enhances this notion of passivity:

1093  \(\text{\textquoteleft cos (.) I just sat down \textit{watching it (.)}}\)

Lines 1096 and 1097 also enhance this notion:

1096  so I just sat down
1097  watching whatever was \(\text{\textuparrow o\textdownarrow n}\)

The ‘just’ s, lines 1093 and 1096, and the ‘whatever’, line 1097, help Eva to construct ‘sitting there’ as what she was doing, rather than actively watching television.

This passivity can reach the extremes of non-awareness, as in our next example, when Lena describes her first subconscious encounter with ‘Jim’ll Fix It’. She, too, constructs herself as ‘just sitting there’, line 1074:

Extract 7.29 (Source AS/TS7)

1068  Lena:  I didn’t watch “Jimmy’ll Fix” then
1069  \(\text{\textquoteleft cos I didn’t (.) know}\)
1070  what it \(\text{\textuparrow w\textdownarrow as}\)
1071  ((laughingly))
1072  Teacher:  \(\text{\textuparrow N\textdownarrow o}\)
1073  Lena:  I didn’t ev \[\text{\textit{en look}}\) I was just \textit{sitting there}
1074  with my mum (.) \(\text{\textit{ing}}\)
1075  Eva:  [didn’t (.6) really
1076  \(\text{\textit{start(ing) watching it}}\)
1077  until I was “sort of” (.2) \textbf{four} or \textbf{five}. (.6)

Eva endorses this developmental view of a person’s television watching (lines 1076 to 1079). Lena’s
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1073 Lena: I didn’t even look
1074 I was just sitting there
1075 with my mum (ing)

affords us with an image of the passivity of an infant in close proximity to its mother.

Why all this passivity on the parts of Eva and Lena? It is all part of their shifting compromise with the teacher. The teacher has expressed her belief that they would be too young to appreciate this particular ‘Jim’ll Fix It’ programme. The children have asserted that they saw it. Thereafter, they construct a picture of their own mental development, displaying their awareness of some later programmes and their inattentive watchings of the programmes in their early years, when they might have inadvertently seen this particular programme.

A person’s autobiography is a way of talking, an arena for rhetoric, for accomplishing actions in-the-telling, rather than merely best efforts at accuracy (cf. Edwards, 1997).

Replicability and Consistency of Events and Phenomena

We shall touch again upon the theme of this subsection when we discuss McDonald’s milkshakes later in this chapter (see subsection on Intersubjectivity and Social Interaction).

There are many devices in talk to uphold the idea of a consistent universal reality, within which experiences can be replicated. We shall examine two data extracts, wherein participants construct this; on this occasion by paralleling their experiential talk with prior experiential talk from other participants and/or inviting other participants to align their experiential talk with theirs. Thus, there is a ‘we-ness’ constructed in the approach to knowledge of the world (see Chapter 5). If ‘reality disjunctures’ between constructions occur, they are accounted for. Reality remains unassailably singular (Pollner, 1987). In the examples I shall give there occur no ‘reality disjunctures’. It is in the negotiation, countering and challenging, etc. of claims that we begin to construct time, place, perception, individual differences. Most of the time we are willing to enlist into this stable, universal, homogeneous, outlook on the world and mankind. After all, knowledge is assumed to be fairly consistent over time, place, person, etc. It would be of little use to learn that ice had low frictional properties at the time of one school
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lesson, but that this situation might have changed by the time of the next lesson. Knowledge and schools would be deemed almost useless. It is because of these assumptions that accumulations of supporting experiences can warrant knowledge claims. In my first example in this subsection, Jessica, the zoologist, in her assertion of the usefulness of animals’ tails, utilizes Clive Anderson’s prior mention of a visit to the African plains:-

Extract 7.30 (Source AS/CA5)

Jessica: * * * * * * * *

498 err have you ever seen (.)
499 you said you’d been to Africa
500 and seen elephants running across the plains
501
502 Clive: [ I have (. ) um

Clive, with line 502, at this stage, co-opts into this idea of a stable reality, but one could well imagine a situation where someone would respond with such as this:

“Oh yes, but that was a long time ago.”

or

“I don’t think it would be the same part of Africa.”

or

“Elephants are now too traumatized by the hunters to do that.”

or

“Yes, but I forgot to take the correct spectacles.”

Time, place and person can easily be unstabilized. Thus, there are many ways to escape from stable realities in the cut and thrust of debate but this underlying assumption of stability serves to legitimate many of our experiential claims and, through them, to promote the legitimation of the knowledge claim, at the same time as it re-enforces the general idea of stability and consistency.

In my second example the teacher is recounting what the children had concluded in the previous lesson about the frictional properties of ice:-

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Extract 7.31 (Source AS/F3)

98 \[ \text{my wheels just skidded over the ice} \]
99 \[ \text{because} \]
100 \[ \text{as you said on Friday} \]
101 \[ \text{ice doesn’t have very much friction (.)} \]

Here the experience on Friday (line 100) legitimates the teacher’s Monday-morning experience (line 98) and the knowledge claim (line 101). Also line 98 legitimates line 101. Each supports the other. Line 101 makes line 98 believable, likely and explained. Line 98 makes line 101 warranted, evidenced and instantiated. Phenomena test theories; but also, as Sacks noted (Sacks, 1992), explanations can be used to tell us what kinds of phenomena there are - e.g. with ghosts, extra-sensory perception, etc., the absence of explanations casts doubt on the phenomena, rather than vice versa.

The propositional language, engaged upon in knowledge construction, e.g. line 101:-

101 \[ \text{ice doesn’t have very much friction (.)} \]

with present tense usage, also lends us this feeling of the consistency and replicability of events and phenomena. It is the generalized present tense, not the ‘now’ kind, as in ‘it is eleven o’clock’.

It seems easier to make elephants’ behaviour variable rather than to make variable the properties of ice. Elephants, after all, have discourses attached to them of different breeds, different developmental ages, different Darwinian species adaptations, different individual psychologies. Ice has far fewer variational accoutrements, especially as, if its properties change, so does its name. It is no longer ice; it is water or slush, etc. Elephants do not change their name as their behaviour changes!

**Appeals to Language as a Conformist Reflector of ‘Reality’**

*Creating a Genre*

Narrative stories are regarded in our culture as a medium or tool for the telling of experience, among other things. If we embark on a story to bolster our knowledge claims, it is accepted, in the first instant, as a ‘real’, authentic experience.
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We mentioned in Chapter 4, with a quotation from Antaki (1994), that Sacks considered stories to be a fine way of ‘traffic management’:-

“Sacks (1972, 1974) engaged theoretical attention by observing that the long stretch of a story... managed to keep at bay something that everywhere else was rampant in conversation: rapid turn-taking.” (p.107)

(See Sacks, 1992, Part 1, Lecture 1, pp. 3 to 16)

Stories tend to be accepted by listeners as possessing beginnings, middles and ends. They tend to be received as wholes. The parts of a story, barricaded within such a total confine, are less likely to be attacked. We all know the starting signal for fairy stories, ‘Once upon a time’, but there are more original ways to herald a tale; for example, the following heralding-in of an experiential claim on the part of the patient in a doctor-patient encounter (data belonging to Phil Manning - printed with permission). At first, the patient resists going beyond ‘hormonal problems’ as a reason for her presence. Her inability to explain her problem in a few words legitimates her story. The right to proceed is negotiated with the doctor. The story is thus pre-announced:-

Extract 7.32 (Source DPD16)

19
D and so you're speaking of - like (. ) menopause=
20 P =right=
21 D =okay okay
22 P okay (1) so:: I mean but- (. ) I have ta- 1- 1- it's>hard to take
23 it out of context< I mean >1 can tell you what's been going
24 on recently but I also have to tell you what< (. ) preceded it=
25 D =okay
26 P to make any sense
27 D okay (. ) go ahead

She can now proceed and has the space to deliver her (very lengthy) story.

However, the fary-tale precursor, or an abridged version, is exceedingly often used. Here Jessica, the zoologist, is approaching the subject of animal humour, as she chats with Clive Anderson.

Extract 7.33 (Source AS/CA6)
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Jessica: but I once watched a television presenter

This affords Jessica twenty-six lines of unaccosted speech in the transcript, only interrupted by Clive’s continuers and audience laughter.

Endings too are important. It is important to seal your story into a unit to preserve its impenetrability. Observe how Jessica ties up this story about the elephant:-

Extract 7.34 (Source AS/CA6)

Jessica: If that doesn’t display a sense of humour
Jessica: [ I don’t know what does

This explanation of this kind of ending phenomenon is quite different from that of the sociolinguist, Labov, and his scheme for analysing everyday narratives (Labov, 1972a). He refers to ‘narrative structure’ and ‘narrative syntax’ and sees these type of endings to stories as merely indicating completion. By so doing, he sees himself in agreement with Harvey Sacks’ (Sacks, 1992) ideas on turn-taking, i.e. these codas indicate that a transition relevance place is approaching. Labov states:-

“Codas close off the sequence of complicating actions and indicate that none of the events that followed were important to the narrative.” (pp. 365 & 366)

In Chapter 5, I have already had much to say about the ‘misguided’ preoccupation of linguists with structure and its legacy to conversation analysis. I would argue that structure is important but the signalling (notice Labov’s word ‘indicate’) of it by participants, in a sense that they are exposing linguistic structures, is an invalid proposition. Structure is important, not in itself, but only when tied to function. Having said that, Labov does come round to a position, at the end of his discussion on codas, of acknowledging their discursive business:-

“…the ‘disjunctive’ codas ... forestall further questions about the narrative itself: the narrative events are pushed away and sealed off.” (p. 366)

This is in line with my analysis of the so-called ‘coda’ Jessica produces.

More will be said about these two lines in the next subsection.

The middle of the story is usually expected to display activity by means of action verbs. The normative expectation is that it is unchallenged. Here is a sample from this same story of Jessica’s:-
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Extract 7.35 (Source AS/CA6)

588 he slapped the elephant on the trunk
* * * * * * * * * * *
590 Jessica: the elephant withdrew her trunk
591 and in the next take of the link
592 she gently put her trunk over (.)
593 with {duːŋ} in the end of it
* * * * * * * * * *
595 Jessica: and smeared it
596 all across his [ front

Not all experiential claims are, of course, thus delivered, in this monologuizing fashion - and that is for a good reason. Stories, thus delivered, although protected from a dissection of the parts, are more susceptible to being written off, in their entirety, as fiction and, accordingly, the ‘actuality’ of the occurrences has to be strongly constructed.

Idioms

Idioms, as part of our culture, can be effective to legitimate our stories because they conjure up, not only what we ourselves have learnt through our experiences, but also our predecessors. Collective experiences have been encapsulated in language.

Drew and Holt (1988) inform us of the effectiveness of idiomatic expressions in the doing of a complaint. We have already looked at the endings of stories and how the ending shelters the whole story from attack. Idiomatic expressions of an almost ‘meta’ nature can be especially effective. The ending we have already scrutinized from Appendix CA6 places Jessica’s story almost on the level of a rhetorical fable, thus protecting it from criticisms of lack of reality-correspondence or exactitude.

Repeat of Extract 7.34

598 Jessica: If that doesn’t display a sense of humour
599 [ I don’t know what does
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Even if this were not an actual experience, it is obviously a stereotypical experience, from which general conclusions can be drawn and the idiomatic expression supports this assumption. From the Drew and Holt perspective, Jessica is carrying out a complaint on the opponents of her viewpoint - the scientists, mentioned earlier in the data.

Extract 7.36 (Source AS/CA6)

557 Jessica: hhh I think animals have
558 a sense of humour
559 but I could be accused of being
560 desperately anthropomorphically
561 for [ saying so
562 Clive: [ Yeh
563 Jessica: I mean scientists are always very stuffy
564 about the fact
565 that you shouldn’t try and put
566 human feelings
567 [ and human emotions onto animals

This is Jessica’s complaint.

Also, Edwards (1989), points out the rhetorical functions of occasions such as this, when we take a ‘meta’ view of our talk, our stories, etc.

This ending, provided by Jessica, also concisely addresses the speaker’s reasons for telling the story, the point of the story. It protects Jessica against accusations of irrelevancy.

Metaphor

Before embarking on this subsection I feel I must issue to the reader a caveat. The caveat is this. Beware of regarding some ways of talking as metaphorical and others as not. All talk could effectively be classed as metaphorical. The topic I wish to discuss in this subsection would be termed as metaphor by literary critics, but not by conversation/discourse analysts. Throughout his book on ‘psychology as metaphor’, Soyland (1994) casts doubts on its ontological status. He looks instead at the persuasive business that likening one thing to another can accomplish, and I shall
endeavour in this brief subsection to do likewise. We shall see that, in the realm of intangible ‘abstract’ objects in talk, the familiar and banal are often introduced as a basis for pursuing preferred understandings. We have already seen an instance of this in Extract 7.20:-

Repeat of Extract 7.20 (Source AS/TS2)

631 It’s (. ) not really anything at all really
632 it’s just (.) a reflection (.)
633 a reflection (.)
634 like [ (.) a reflection in the water.

The abstraction of the concept of a rainbow is made more concrete by likening it to the more familiar phenomena we experience with, say, pools of water.

We shall next return to Candela’s (1995) thesis on science teaching in schools, with which we were made acquainted in Chapter 3. In this first example a boy challenges anyone who has leant on a tree to come to the conclusion that wood is not heavy (lines 52 and 53). The resource is that people are more likely to have had experience of leaning on trees than to have weighed wood scientifically.

Extract 7.37 (Source Extract 2.10)

50 T: are you sure?
51 Ch: ye:::s
52 B: yes because (. ) see if you can, lean on a tree
53 * * to realize if it is not heavy

(p. 110)

In our next example, also from Candela (1995), a girl likens humans near a bonfire to planets in relation to the sun.

Extract 7.38 (Source Extract 2.9)

T: You mentioned that it was the most....
B1: Cold
T: Why?
B1: Because the Sun’s rays don’t get that far.
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B2: Is it all frozen, like with snow?

T: Not exactly

T: Who can give me an example?

G: For example, we make a fire and it’s a cloudy day
and we move away from the fire, we get colder,
and if we move closer we get warmer.

T: Yes, exactly, that would be like the experiment.

(p. 109)

Without any other source of heat, moving close to the fire would warm you up,
moving away would cool you down. This also is the case with planetary movement in
relation to the sun. The resource is that people are more likely to have the experience
of warming themselves at fires than to experientially consider planetary motion.

Moving on to my own data, we can see this alignment, this paralleling of objects
in a wider discourse context. Here, in the family discussion following the Christmas
lecture, Pete, having highlighted the importance of the clarification of the point he is
about to topicalize (lines 1644 and 1645; also 1648 and 1649), likens medication to a
key:-

Extract 7.39 (Source AS/FD2)

1644 Pete: It didn’t make it clear
1645 how it found (. ) the: viral [DNA
1646 Ken: [ Yeh (. )
1647 yeh (. ) yeh
1648 Pete: ’cos Ken asked me
1649 about twenty times on that
1650 Ken: ((laughs))
1651 Pete: and I said that it only fitte(d) (. )
1652 It was like a [ key.
1653 Dad: It was like a key.
1654 Ken: [ (So) (.)
1655 Pete: It would go to whichever part of the body
1656 ↑w↓as taking nutrition.
1657 Pete: ↑Would it- (.)
Pete asserts that the medication would attach itself only to ‘dodgy’, ‘virusy’ slots, in a locking mechanism (lines 1664 to 1666). To counter this knowledge position, Dad does not destroy the metaphor. He does not undermine the medication’s likeness to a key. He develops the metaphor further, likening it to, what we could perhaps call, a master key (excuse my own metaphor!), which is undiscriminating as it accesses slots (lines 1667 to 1669).

Metaphors, like idioms, are extremely powerful rhetorically and Dad would have found difficulty unpicking the assumptions underlying the metaphorical linkage. It is easier for Pete to construct his knowledge construction as what everyone knows about keys and locks, rather than what everyone knows about medication and DNA! It is also quite acceptable for us to teach difficult concepts by likening them to something more mundane and more simple to understand. We understand that the workings of one thing are often aligned to the workings of something else. This is part of our common-sense knowledge. It is easier, therefore, to keep the metaphor and slightly adapt it to support a new knowledge position, as Dad does here. Pete’s personification of the medication (line 1666) as a seeker of viruses has also disappeared. The slotting is now almost accidental, uncontrolled:-

Extract 7.40 (Source AS/FD2)

1674 Dad: [ That is why
there’re so many side effects.

Later in the session Pete re-introduces his version as a story:-

Extract 7.41 (Source AS/FD2)

1718 Roger the Rocket went with [ the protein
1720 Pete: on a beautiful (.) [ summer’s day
1722 Pete: and no (.)
1723 and he went to the DNA (.)
1724 to um (.) build it up
1725 (.6)
1726 and (.)
1727 he destroyed it
1728 (1.0)
1729 Wasn’t that a nice ↑story ((laughingly))

We have returned to personification (the medication even possesses a name now). The motivation of the action (line 1724) and the effect (line 1727) are at odds with each other. This would come as a shock to the perpetrator of the action. Pete, thus, negotiates a compromise between his own position of the actions and effects being determined by intention and his dad’s, that the medication is indiscriminate in its joining with DNA.

A Premature Conclusion To the Thesis

As will be observed by an astute reader, the dichotomous division I have drawn up in the format of this thesis between the construction of interpretation and objectivity in experiential claims in knowledge-construction contexts is beginning to crumble, to display its untenability, its inability to be sustained. Often at one and the same time the separateness of the object from human life and its absorption into general interpretation, its phenomenological properties, are constructed as warrants to its existence. I have not successfully kept construction of objectivity away from appeals to
general and specific human interpretation. Perhaps this is hardly surprising. After all, it is humans who are engaged in social actions through rhetoric and if, by managing the sequential nature of talk, they can bring off actions as warranted both by the external world and inner interpretations, if they can unite humans and the world in this way, without inciting criticisms of paradox, it can be most effective.

As Mehan and Wood (1975) point out in their Chapter 10, when they consider the philosophical grounds for ethnomethodology, the relationship between interpretation and understanding and the relationship between constitutive Becoming and deterministic Becoming, which we find in the process of ethnomethodological analysis, are the same. Theirs is not a dialectical nor an opposing relationship. They are mutually constitutive in their becoming; mutually contained in their being. Mehan and Wood liken the relationship to that between day and night.

“Neither is said to be the source, and the other the emanation. Each is at once source and emanation. Each is independent of and dependent upon the other. Neither is denigrated. Neither is elevated. As constitutive Becoming and deterministic Becoming, the two are mutually constitutive. As constitutive Being and deterministic Being, the two are mutually contained. Indexicality and reflexivity generate these relations. Constitutive Being indexes deterministic Being. By so indexing, constitutive Being both emanates from and becomes a source for deterministic Being …… The former relation is established by constitutive Being’s dependence upon deterministic Being’s horizon of possibility. The latter relation is established by constitutive Being’s reflexive disappearance into deterministic Being, thereby recasting that Being. Constitutive and deterministic Being are, therefore, One and Many.” (pp. 202 & 203)

I have quoted Mehan and Wood at length because the message behind this quotation is a thread running throughout my thesis.

In Chapter 2 (my Method chapter), we considered accusations that discourse/conversation analysis was paradoxical, relying upon logico-empiricism for its method and hermeneutic-dialecticism for its theory, both standing in a dialectical relationship to each other. Ethnomethodology, however, can reconcile the two and position them in a relationship like day and night, as described in the Mehan and Wood quotation. Also, in Chapter 2 of this thesis, we saw how the boundedness of repertoire discourse analysis fails to appreciate the flow between the subjective and the objective in talk, the mutual sustenance of the two.
In Chapter 1, we saw the supremacy of an idea of a dichotomous relationship between human passivity and human activity in traditional educational theories; an idea of pupils imprisoned in a deterministic world, or as great constructors of ideas. Even as I write, I can hear protests that Piaget’s theory of assimilation and accommodation reflects the ideas I have discussed in this subsection. I would argue that, in Piaget’s theory, there is no indexing of person or time. There is only potentiality. This person- and time-independency of the theory gives it a universalism and a sense of person passivity. We previously discussed this in connection with the following data (from the ‘senses’ discussion, at a point where the children and teacher are discussing rainbow circularity) with the generalized ‘you’, where there is person- and time- independency; data which we encountered in Chapters 4 & 5:-

Extract 7.42 (Source AS/TS1)

545 Lena: circle in the .hh(.) sky
546 ’cos(.) if you go over a rainbow
547 in an airplane
548 and you look down
549 you can see it (.2)
550 but (at the bottom of it it’s ground)

The object is specific - the circular rainbow - but the person and time are generalized. The object is, thus, reified over time for various persons to encounter. In Piaget’s theory, the world of objects is a given. They will not be changed by their encounters with pupils. It is the pupils who will be changed cognitively, psychologically, developmentally. The objects, in Piaget’s theory, cannot make a sole impact on pupils. They can only do so in the light of previous encounters. Nonetheless, it is a theory where the pupil is viewed as being formed and moulded by experiences. (Note:- I am, of course, not trying to say that the opposite is true. I am just trying to show how the organization of discourse affects our view of cognitive procedures.)

When previously I quoted Mehan and Wood’s deliberations on the relationship between interpretation and objectivity, I was struck by the consideration that the word ‘interpretation’ does connote a second-level activity, akin to Piaget’s schemata creations. I would prefer to speak in broader terms, in terms of orientations, in discourse, towards the person(s) and orientations towards the object(s).
Legitimation of Experiential Claims

Throughout the data chapters, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7, I have been struggling to divorce the two parents of ethnomethodology and, at last, we can explicitly survey the crumbling ruins. Interpretation and the understood, the determinate, can co-exist and appeals to both can be made in single instances of experiential talk.

It is evident that we can, if we so desire, construct a constitutive/deterministic divide in speech and make them do battle, the one with the other, but we should not look on that as an absolute reality, rather a way of talking, a situated ‘reality’, as indeed my joining them together and reconciling them, under the authoritative stamp of a conclusion, must also be!

Appeals to Language as a Conformist Reflector of ‘Reality’ (continued)

Linguistic Categorical Expressions

As we are discovering, we can cement our story in a framework of general interpretation by appealing to the linguistics of our language. We can deliver the message that if there exists an expression for something, it must exist. Erudite personages have given appellations to these phenomena and this petrifies them in reality. Observe how this is achieved in the following extract taken from Appendix TS8. The teacher and the four lunch-time children are discussing whether snakes can be seen:

Extract 7.43 (Source AS/TS8. Includes Extract 7.16)

1138 Teacher: (R↑↓right)
1139 [ (. ) Can you see a snake?
1149 Lena: [ It’s
camouflaged sometimes.
1150 (.4)
1152 Some are red
1153 and it (.8)
1154 and some are green
1155 camerade (.)
1156 camouflaged to the gra:ss.
1157 Some of them are (.2) blue
Legitimation of Experiential Claims

1158 and they go in the water
1159 >'cos I've seen them in the water
1160 ( )<=
1161 Grant: water snakes
1162 (Lena:) Um
1163 (1.6)

Edwards (1991) shows us how categories are often used as a means of social action in talk. Famous examples are to be found in Wowk (1984), where the construction of categories of people aid blame allocation; in Jayyusi (1984), which deals with categories and the moral order; and Sacks (1992) on 'hotrodders' and membership categorization devices (Volume 1, Part II, Lecture 7, Fall 1965). Potter (1988) also deals with categorizations when he takes a look at psychologists' social categorizations and their discursive usage.

Here, Lena’s knowledge claim that snakes cannot always be seen because of their camouflaging properties has run into troubled rhetorical waters. As an example of camouflaging she has mentioned blue snakes in water:-

1157 Some of them are (.2) blue
1158 and they go in the water

and she has supported this with an 'I' experiential claim:-

1159 >'cos I’ve seen them in the water
1160 ( )<=

The problem is the knowledge claim is they cannot be seen and here she is actually seeing them! Grant comes to Lena’s aid and cements the existence of snakes that live in the water with this linguistic categorization:-

1161 Grant: water snakes

and Lena agrees with this categorization:-
Before Grant’s contribution, Lena, of course, has begun the process of categorization by subdividing snakes into colour groups to align them with different environments. Grant’s contribution also gains force from Lena’s prior script formulation:-

and they go in the water

Script formulations (event descriptions) are discussed by Edwards (1994b). People, animals, etc. and actions are tied together. The former are viewed as carrying out the latter continually over time. This can be individuals (a pub-going husband, for example) or, as is the case here, categories or groups of people. As is also accounted for in perceptuo-cognitive script theory, we can legitimate a particular instance by a generalized formulation or we can legitimate a generalized formulation by a particular instance (Billig, 1985, deals with particularization and generalization; also my Chapter 5). Lena here attempts to authorize her general formulation by a particular experiential instance (although, admittedly, she does not stress the singular aspect of it) but, as we have already seen, for the reason already stated, comes unstuck interactionally, as is perceivable in the data. In the next subsection we shall discuss one of the reasons why a single experiential claim can uphold a generalized formulation and is often not countered by accusations of being a single, perhaps even singular in the ‘extraordinary’ sense, instance.

Let us return from our visit to script theory to a broader look at linguistic categorization. Many cognitive psychologists would expound the theory that semantic categories reflect cognitive structures. Edwards (1994a) compares this approach to the linguistic determinism of Whorf (1956) and to a discursive theory. He spotlights the example of Whorf’s ‘empty gasoline drum’ which exploded because it was not empty after all. It was full of explosive vapour. Whorf’s argument is that we ignore the dangers because we habitually label the petrol drum as ‘empty’. Cognitivists would disagree with Whorf that the problem was a linguistic one; they would label it as a cognitive one. Edwards (1994a) would sympathize more with Whorf’s perspective but develops the linguistic aspect further.
"Descriptions of objects and events provide for the accountability of actions, provide excuses, and deal generally with 'attributional' issues of cause, intention and accountability (Edwards and Potter, 1992a). Whorf provides no detailed ethnography, but describing the drums as EMPTY might well provide for an actor's accountability, in accidentally, but understandably and excusably, causing a fire."

(p. 216: emphasis in the original)

With the term 'water snakes' (line 1161) in my data just presented, Grant utilizes humans' adherence to suchlike theories as a resource in the situation (such theories as the Whorfian hypothesis of habitual usage; the theories of cognitive structures; biological and micro-biological theories about the compatibility of snakes and water, etc.). Experts have linked these two words together either in reality, or in language usage, or in the human mind. That verifies their co-existence or, at least, their co-existence for human beings. This is inferentially implied and is effective in silencing counter attacks.

'Water snakes' also labels them as a kind of snake, rather than just being reliant upon having seen one enter the water. That these snakes go into the water is built into their nature by being built into their name. The name 'water snakes' allows you to say that they go in the water without having to have seen them do it. It backs that experiential claim.

I agree with Edwards (1994a) that we need go no further than the words and the social action in which the participant is engaging. We need nothing beyond that. Again Edwards (1994a):

"... we should perhaps assume that words are designed precisely for such usage, for flexibility and the rhetoric this provides for, in the production of situated descriptions. The relationship between semantic categories, perception and reality is then one that is subordinated to rhetoric, to the business of constructing and countering persuasive versions."

(p. 217)

**Appeals to the Actions of Individuals as Understandable**

**Motivation**

In a discourse theory, attributes which traditional psychologists would regard as cognitive and internal can be seen as being publicly on show and often imputed by others. Motivation is one such attribute. It is inferentially visible. Mills (1967; originally 1940) informs us that motives are attributed to a person by others before they are
avowed by that person themselves (p. 360). Madill and Doherty (1994) explain the approach of Discursive Psychology to motivation:

“...attribution of motivation is argued to be inseparable from the rhetorical organization and functional context of interaction (Heritage 1990-1991; Potter et al, 1993).”

(p. 10)

Let us glance once more at Lena’s knowledge claim concerning snake visibility, the move to categorization, the script formulation and the experiential claim. This can be found in Extract 7.43.

Repeat of Part of Extract 7.43 (Source AS/TS8)

1149 Lena:  [ It’s
1150 camouflaged sometimes.
1151 (.4)
1157 Some of them are (.2)
1158 and they go in the water
1159 >’cos I’ve seen them in the water
1160 ( )<=

The subject-verb construction on line 1158

1158 and they go in the water

affords the incident an agential quality. The implication is that the snakes go in the water to be camouflaged. This backs up the supposition that they would be carrying out this act time and time again (‘they go’), and not just on a single occasion.

A feature which can be written off and derided as anthropomorphism can often be discovered in our talk about animals, as will be again perceived in our next data extract (one we have already encountered in Chapter 5). However, Edwards (1997) warns us of regarding anthropomorphism as merely an attributional error, rather than as an intrinsic feature of human social relations:

“ It may be that the same kind of social and discursive practices by which we ... accord human attributes to non-humans play an essential part in our everyday interactions with each other.”

(p. 307)
In the following extract, Jessica, the zoologist, on the television programme with
Clive Anderson, is discussing how tails are used for sex in the animal kingdom.

Extract 7.44 (Source AS/CA5)

Jessica: if you’re
((she laughs))
if you’re a ↑p↓eacock
and you <spread that amazing tail out:
and the hens stand in front of you
and they watch you very carefully
what they’re actually doing (.)
scientists think (.)
is is assessing
how many of those wonderful eye spots
you’ve got on your tail feather (.)

Clive: Yeh
Jessica: and (. ) tail feathers
and if you happen to have
like a (sort of) low number of eye spots
maybe you’ve only got sixty
in your train (.)

Clive: Yes
Jessica: you’re absolutely no good
you’re not going to get ↑a↓ny
↑j↓oy with [ any of the females

Clive: [ O:h no:
Jessica: hundred and twenty eye spots
and they think
he’s a really fit, sexy male
and [ you’re away.

Clive: [ Yeh (.)
O:h right
I knew I was missing out somewhere
We have already discussed in Chapter 5 how the ambiguity of the term ‘you’, its generality and its specificity, helps to consensualize the knowledge claim. In the following analysis, I shall recap a little on consensual issues, as well as introducing experiential ones. Here Clive finds it difficult, once the consensus construction ‘you’ and the authentic experience have been constructed, to undermine the claim without, at the same time, undermining his own prowess in this area of activity (sex). In his first attempt at highlighting Jessica’s anthropomorphism he does come close to falling into this trap:-

I knew I was missing out somewhere

but after the laughter from Jessica and the audience, he decides to counter Jessica’s claim by a more humorous and telling distinction between peacocks and himself (see next extract). This time (line 457) only the audience laughs, not Jessica. Clive is highlighting Jessica’s anthropomorphism, pointing out the peacock/human divide which Jessica has (alleged implicitly) ignored.

Extract 7.45 (Source AS/CA) - Extension of Extract 7.44
549 Jessica: You’re not going to get anywhere then attempts to re-introduce the tenor of line 541 and Clive, with line 552.

552 Clive: err (.) not with the peahens anyway recreates the human/peacock divide.

Beware of looking on this as a mental strategic struggle. This would be tempting because of such words as ‘attempts’, ‘battle’, ‘decides’ in my text. It is the knowledge claims which are doing battle, not the people.

As discourse analysts we cannot look on Jessica’s anthropomorphism as an ‘error’. Both her construction of human/peacock alignment and Clive’s construction of human/peacock separation are ways of talking which perform social actions.

Throughout this extract, motivation is imputed to the peacocks’ actions. The peacocks and the peahens are both intent on mating - the peacocks taking on the passive role of display; the peahens doing the choosing. We begin with descriptions of the actual behaviour, lines 516 and 517 (Extract 7.44):

516 and you <spread that amazing tail out>
517 and the hens stand in front of you

and then we learn what the peahens are ‘actually’ (also Extract 7.44, line 519) doing, their inner motivation for standing there:-

521 * * assessing
522 how many of those wonderful eye spots
523 you’ve got on your tail feather (.)

The human discursive resource of motivation, and of mental, cognitive processes generally (e.g. those implied by the word ‘assessing’), makes this story more plausible to the listeners.
From the perspective of experience, the ‘you’s, used throughout, place us in the experience of the peafowl, a self-consciously anthropomorphic way of talking, and that is what permits Clive’s personalized take in line 541.

**Appeals to Understandings between Social Beings**

*Intersubjectivity and Social Interaction*

Leading on from the last subsection on motivation construction, we can take a broader view and consider all human attributes which are imputed by an introduction of social interaction into the story. The introduction of social interaction appeals to our common-sense reasoning and thus bestows an air of reality and plausibility to stories. Consensus of understanding can also objectify ‘reality’ and events. First of all, I shall return to the extract on elephant humour, which we encountered in Chapter 4. Jessica and Clive are again the interactants. In the story the interaction of the elephant and a human lend the elephant human attributes and facilitate a conclusion that animals have a sense of humour.

Extract 7.46 (Source AS/CA6)

| 569 | Jessica: | but I once watched a television presenter |
| 570 |         | who was standing                           |
| 571 |         | in front of an elephant enclosure         |
| 572 |         | trying to do a link                      |
| 573 |         | and he got the link wrong                |
| 574 | Clive:  | Umm                                      |
| 575 | Jessica:| and the elephant was interested          |
| 576 |         | in what was going on=                    |
| 577 |         | the elephant put her trunk               |
| 578 |         | over the (.) man’s shoulder (. )         |
| 579 |         | ((slight swallow))                       |
| 580 |         | and he kept getting the link wrong       |
| 581 |         | because the elephant kept fondling him (.)|
| 582 |         | in front                                |
| 583 | Clive:  | Yes                                      |
| 584 | Jessica:| and he couldn’t concentrate             |
| 585 |         | and say his words                       |
while he was being fondled.

So after about the third attempt

he slapped the elephant on the trunk

Clive: Umm

the elephant withdrew her trunk
and in the next take of the link
she gently put her trunk over (.)
with ↓dung in the end of it

Audience: ((laughter))

Jessica: and smeared it
all across his [ front

Clive: [ ((laughs)) ( )

Jessica: If that doesn’t display a sense of humour
[ I don’t know what does

There is not a great deal of explicit human attributional labelling of the elephant here. It is the description of the man and the elephant interacting which inferentially designates the elephant as humorous. At the end, of course, humour is explicitly mentioned, as animals’ possession of this is the knowledge claim that Jessica is attempting to endorse. The only other explicit attributional labelling of the elephant is on line 575:-

Jessica: and the elephant was interested

Clive, again, as with the peacock story, tries to undermine the story by, once again, inferentially levelling a charge of anthropomorphism at Jessica, which overlaps Jessica’s rhetorically powerful story conclusion (see subsections on Idiom and Genre).

I think it is worth repeating here that, as a conversation/discourse analyst, I am not accusing Jessica of wrong attributional labelling. My example could have been a human/human interactional sequence. There is no inference of a reality behind the talk.

Notice how Jessica selects a story about a specific animal (elephant), when asked by Clive whether animals have a sense of humour.
Legitimation of Experiential Claims

Extract 7.47 (Source AS/CA6)

556 <Do animals have a sense of humour?>

She does not reply with a statement such as this, “Well, I think marmosets do and rhinoceroses do, but I’m not sure about giraffes.” The stage has been set by Clive, that we can categorize all animals together and answer the question (see the subsection on Categorization). As with my hypothetical example, Jessica could have subsetted animals, to destroy the assumption behind the question. Instead, she accepts the initial general premise and selects a subset to exemplify why she is opting for a ‘Yes’ answer. Many questions, that teachers ask, normatively require a yes/no answer. Here is just one example from my data. You will find many more.

Extract 7.48 (Source AS/TS4)

925 Teacher: So that’s all iýmaginaTry?
926 People (. ) couldn’t really not have shadows?
927 Child: [ (. ) couldn’t really not have shadows?
928 Lena: No-
929 (.6)

If the children attempt to demolish the question, they can be classed as argumentative, pedantic, etc. Social order and organization can be threatened (see Garfinkel’s ‘breaching’ experiments, 1967, and in Heritage, 1984). However, all these things depend upon context and accountabilities. If the didactic accountabilities of the teacher are lessened (as, perhaps, in university seminars), the accountability for argumentation, even as regards the question, may win through.

So, after this example of the elephant, my formulative gloss on intersubjectivity and social interaction would be that the creation of it bestows a credibility to stories. As with number constructions and other constructions we have come across in this chapter, we must not regard talk as carrying out a unitary social action. Intersubjectivity and social interaction constructions can often do more than lend credibility to stories (see the subsection on Dialogic Voicing in Chapter 6, wherein it was shown how a mutual referencing of a phenomenon can enhance its objectivity).

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One activity that humans interactively carry out is mathematics. We can show in our discourse how people intersubjectively orientate to a common understanding through the use of mathematics.

Potter, Wetherell and Chitty (1991) give us an insight into the 'mathematicization' of phenomena, into how mathematical order is attributed to objects for rhetorical purposes. They refer us, for example, to works researching the rhetoric of number and money in financial dealings, e.g. Clark and Pinch (1988 and 1995) and Pinch and Clark (1986). Number is viewed as aiding and abetting humans in their attempt to order and organize the constructed world. Discursively, as we have seen, it can be a resource to enhance facticity. If we can align our stories with some sense of mathematical theory, it can make the story seem more real and our conclusions about the psychology, etc., imputed in the story, more plausible. In this device which demonstrates a human response to objectivity (the creation of a symbolic system), we rely upon the cultural resource of an adherence to the philosophy of determinism. Mehan and Wood have this to say:-

"Though humanity may have ultimately created the world’s meaning, for all practical purposes the world can be viewed as the cause of humanity’s meaningful behaviour. Understanding becomes the primordial phase of human being. Interpretation is seen as an effect of the world’s variables and structure. People are presumed to share a common intersubjective world. This is a Locke faith ..........." (p. 198)

Take a look at the following. Jessica, the zoologist on the Clive Anderson television show, is discussing the mating ritual of peacocks and the tails of the males. This is an extract already encountered in this chapter and in Chapter 5.

Repeat of Part of Extract 7.44 (Source AS/CA5)

Jessica: * * * * * * *
526 and if you happen to have
527 like a (sort of) low number of eye spots
528 maybe you’ve only got sixty
529 in your train (.)
530 Clive: Yes
531 Jessica: you’re absolutely no good
Legitimation of Experiential Claims

532 you’re not going to get any
533 joy with any of the females
534 Clive: [ O: h no:
535 Jessica: hundred and twenty eye spots
536 and they think
537 he’s a really fit, sexy male
538 and [ you’re away.

Here the peacocks and ourselves share the same intersubjective world that Mehan and Wood mentioned in the above quotation, both interested in the exact doubling of desirables. Humans on quiz shows are eager to double their money. Peacocks are obviously desirous of doubling their eye spots. By creating a situation with which humans can empathize, the speaker makes the psychology, motivation and behaviour of the peacocks more real and more plausible.

In Chapter 6 and the subsection on Dialogic Voicing, we saw Lena constructing her intersubjectivity with Alice in the school library (Extract 6.8), to convince the listener of the objectivity of the phenomenon and the properties of glass. In our next extract, ‘mathematicization’ (to use Potter, Wetherell and Chitty’s term, 1991) is carried out between Dad and the elder son and the function here is, in a similar vein, to objectify McDonald’s milkshakes as a remarkable phenomenon, consistent over time.

Let us, first, put the extract in context by supplying the prior extract. Dad is referencing Pete’s encounter with a McDonald’s milkshake in London, as an example of something indeterminate between food and drink (lines 2561 to 2563). Pete generalizes that specific milkshake to all McDonald’s milkshakes, agrees that they are indigestible and states he has avoided them since that encounter in London (lines 2564 to 2566). Ken, the younger brother, proclaims he enjoyed the thick shake he had (lines 2567 to 2572) and Mum implies Ken’s milkshakes (now in the plural) were thicker than the one Pete had in London (lines 2573 to 2575). Pete, in lines 2577 and 2578, although there has been no mention from Ken and Mum as to whether or not Ken’s milkshake(s) were McDonald’s, sets up a situation where the reputation, or notoriety, of McDonald’s milkshakes has to be defended. Dad and Pete are then left in a position intersubjectively to demonstrate the indigestibility and consistency of McDonald’s milkshakes. Let us now view the transcript of this introductory sequence:-
Extract 7.49 (Source AS/FD3)

2561 Dad: [I remember in London
2562 you with that () m milkshake
2563 in that um () McDonald’s=
2564 Pete: I’ve never had
2565 a McDonald’s milkshake since (.)
2566 It >w’s< so indigestible.
2567 Ken: °I°
2568 (.6)
2569 °I’ve done°
2570 (1.2)
2571 I quite liked it
2572 [ ( )
2573 Mum: [ He’s had worse (.)
2574 He’s had really thick ones.
2575 (.6)
2576 Dad: ( ) that was
2577 Pete: Are >you< trying to say
2578 McDonald’s ↓aren’t?
2579 Ken: Pete=

Let us now look at the extract where ‘mathematicization’ is carried out:-

Extract 7.50 (Source AS/FD3). Directly following on from Extract 7.49.

2580 Pete: I might try one
2581 because it’s been about seven years
2582 since I’ve had one (.)
2583 longer [ (even)
2584 Dad: [ I don’t think they’ve ↑changed.
2585 (.2)
2586 Pete: How old was I?
2587 about eight?
Legitimation of Experiential Claims

2588 (1.2)  
2589 >or< younger?  
2590 Dad: "younger I guess"  
2591 Pete: about five?  
2592 Dad: ("Um")  
2593 Pete: so it's been about ten years  
2594 Dad: ("Yes")  
2595 Pete: (They) might have changed  
2596 Dad: "No"  
2597 Pete: ↓No  
2598 Dad: ("Yes")  
2599 Pete: (They) haven't changed.  
2600 Pete: I haven't had one for ten years.  
2601 Dad: ("Oh")  
2602 Pete: ↓Why  
2603 Dad: They haven't changed.  
2604 Dad: I haven't had one for ten years.  
2605 Pete: Can't I try another one? (.)  
2606 ((laughs)) hhh  
2607 Dad: ("Of course")  
2608 Pete: ("Of course")  
2609 Dad: then I'll- give it a miss  
2610 Pete: for another ten years (.) hhhh  
2611 Dad: I might get through about nine  
2612 in my entire life (.)  
2613 Pete: unless I decide I like them  
2614 (2.0)  
2615 Ken: ↑No (.)  
2616 Pete: if you decide you like them  
2617 Ken: then you'll have (.) more.  
2618 (1.6)
Legitimation of Experiential Claims

The tentativeness, with which Pete is prepared to approach this phenomenon (the word ‘try’ is iterated three times, twice emphasized, lines 2580, 2599 and 2606; ‘might’ occurs three times, lines 2580, 2596 and 2612; and there is the asking for permission, with ‘Can’t I’, on line 2606) and the dad’s insistence that they will still be as unpalatable as ever (lines 2584, 2597, 2604) creates for us a sense that a consistent something called a McDonald’s milkshake does indeed exist and it is something to be held in awe. With line 2614,

2614 unless I decide I like them

Pete leads us to believe that, if he develops a liking for this phenomenon, it will be his taste that has changed, not the milkshake.

Pete’s personality has been slightly threatened by Ken and Mum in lines 2567 to 2575 of the introductory sequence, so hence the question mark over the consistency of his taste, displayed in line 2614:-

2614 unless I decide I like them

That the ‘mathematicization’ conducted by Pete and Dad in Extract 7.50 has ‘worked’ is shown by Ken’s reaction. In his lines:-

2616 Ken: ↑N↓o (.)
2617 if you decide you like them
2618 then you’ll have (.) more.
2619 (1.6)

Ken accepts McDonald’s milkshakes as a real phenomenon, in all their thickness, consistent over time. He accepts that Pete’s taste might change over the years. The only argument, which Ken has now, is that Pete might have his mathematical concepts wrong. Ken has been co-opted into Pete and Dad’s way of speaking and, although line 2616 sounds like disagreement, there is much agreement in Ken’s orientation here.
Legitimation of Experiential Claims

**Appeals to the Relationship between Events**

**Causation**

Sacks (1992), with his example,

"The baby cried. The mommy picked it up."

shows us over the course of two lectures (pp. 252 to 266) that these two sentences go beyond being just two descriptive independent sentences.

The sequential nature of talk lends itself to inferences of causation as well as motivation, intention, etc. One event can gain credibility and a sense of events happening in a connected sequence, as experienced, in real time, and in perceptual detail, by its imputed causative relationship to a prior event. The elements of the story, if interlinked, are more securely fortified against counter-attack. Edwards and Potter (1992a) attack traditional attribution theory, e.g. Brown’s (1986) ‘causal calculus’, wherein people are painted as attributing causal responsibility on the basis of the so-called ‘information variables’ - consensus, distinctiveness and consistency (see Edwards and Potter, 1992a, pp. 82 to 102). Edwards and Potter (1992a), of course, have a counter version to all this:-

"...versions, explanations and inferences are constructed, implied and embedded in talk."

(p. 102)

This point is also taken up in Edwards and Potter (1993). Lewin (1994), following on from the train of thought of Heidegger (e.g. 1961) and of Dreyfus (1991), draws our attention to ‘practical holism’, the ways of world-constituting that humans embed into their practices (e.g. narratives). These generate inferences of cause, etc., as we also noted in the subsection entitled Motivation. This is not only the case of human attributes, but of their very beings. Smith, (1990) notes how the practical organization of talk at a meeting constitutes the subjectivities within that meeting:-

"In entering its deictic order, the subject is engaged, geared in, to use Schutz’s phrase."

(p. 82)

Space prevents the presentation of more than one example of causation from my own data. Happenings can be attributed to people, of course, but this example primarily creates causal relationships between objects. The children, in the lunch-time discussion with the teacher on material properties, are countering the teacher’s version of glass’ being soft (in the foundry). Andy narrates of his dad’s experience with hard glass:-
Legitimation of Experiential Claims

Extract 7.51 (Source AS/MP6)

847 Andy: Once my daddy locked himself out
850 he had to get out (Mr) ’s ladder
851 and then he had to climb up
852 into the little bedroom (.4) window
853 and smash it
854 then get in
855 and he got stuck I think
856 or else he (nicked) his trousers
857 and they
858 [ had a <big hole in them round here>
859 Child: [ (laughs)]
860 Andy: he (nicked) it on the window (pane).

The causal sequencing that we first infer from all this is that the smallness of the bedroom window

852 into the little bedroom (.4) window

combined with the broken glass

853 and smash it

cause either his dad to get stuck

855 and he got stuck I think

or his dad’s trousers to get torn.

856 or else he (nicked) his trousers

246
In lines 857 and 858 he plumps for the tearing of the trousers as the certainty out of the two options. The ‘<big hole’ (line 858) in the trousers was by now a certainty

and thus the cause of the appearance of the big hole - his dad’s coming into contact with the broken glass - becomes a certainty for us too. Andy affirms this explicitly as a fact, on line 860, in his formulation of what happened.

As well as causal reasoning’s enhancing the plausibility of the whole story, the causal relationship between the glass and the trousers validates the children’s counter knowledge claim that glass is hard. We must always consider this kind of talk in its knowledge-construction context and this context is one of argumentation (see Chapter 3).

As already stated, causal inferences, from the perspective of experiential claims, construct a sense of events happening in a connected sequence, as experienced, in real time, and in perceptual detail.

**Logic**

In times of extreme stress from oppositional stances, we can see narrated experiences doubly insuring rhetorical impact and often taking the experience away from the narrator’s personal stake. This is what I shall call ‘logic’. Coulter (1991a) takes us on a historical tour of the relationship between logos and praxis and attributes to Wittgenstein, Austin and Ryle the extension of logic into:-

> “the analysis of the intersubjective, communicative, and essentially practical sphere of the social world.”

(p. 32)

This idea of ‘logic’ can be observed in the following example. You will see that, in lines 1110 and 1111 (Extract 7.58), Eva formulates the logic of the conclusions the narrative has to offer us.

As the lunch-time discussion moves from the substantiveness of shadows to camera trickery, the teacher reports to the four children that her son, Pete, was on a “Jim’ll Fix It” television programme (a series of programmes wherein people, mainly
Legitimation of Experiential Claims

children, had their wishes fulfilled) in a performance which involved camera trickery. Andy asserts he saw the programme:-

Extract 7.52 (Source AS/TS7)

1043 Andy: >I< think I saw that one.
1044 (1.0)

The teacher at several points removes the validity of the children's memory:-

Extract 7.53 (Source AS/TS7) Following on from Extract 7.52

1045 Teacher: Oh
1046 it was along time ago.
1047 It was nineteen eighty six
1048 How old would you be then?

and

Extract 7.54 (Source AS/TS7)

1063 Teacher: but I don't think
1064 you'd remember it
1065 would you

Eva then offers her age as being 'four' or 'five' when she encountered the programme for the first time.

Extract 7.55 (Source AS/TS7)

1076 Eva: [ didn't (.6) really
1077 start(ing) watching it
1078 until
1079 until I was *sort of* (.2) four or five. (.6)

248
The age is vague in the face of the teacher's constructions about age and developmental memory. Eva too constructs her memory as vague in the light of potential criticism about its accuracy considering her age at the time of the experience.

Extract 7.56 (Source AS/TS7)

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1082</td>
<td>Eva:</td>
<td>I think I found that- hh out on hh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1083</td>
<td></td>
<td>(1.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1084</td>
<td></td>
<td>It was Boxing Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1085</td>
<td></td>
<td>I first saw it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1086</td>
<td></td>
<td>I think=</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the face of such strong opposition, Eva moves her claim from Christmas Day to Boxing Day, implying that her experience and the one pinpointed by the teacher are different.

The teacher continues to strip the validity from Eva’s memory:

Extract 7.57 (Source AS/TS7) Extension of Extract 7.56

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1087</td>
<td>Eva:</td>
<td>(Oh)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1088</td>
<td></td>
<td>↓w↑as it hhh ((laughingly))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1089</td>
<td></td>
<td>you remember ↓th↑at hh hh</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Eva then constructs a logical argument to help her construct the story of her first encounter with “Jim'll Fix It” on Boxing Day. Her memory is no longer a sufficient warrant.

Extract 7.58 (Source AS/TS7) Extension of Extract 7.57

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1090</td>
<td>Eva:</td>
<td>Oh yeh quite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1091</td>
<td></td>
<td>'cos-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1092</td>
<td></td>
<td>(.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1093</td>
<td></td>
<td>'cos (. ) I just sat down watching it (. )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1094</td>
<td></td>
<td>'cos (. ) my grandma doesn't have a video:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1095</td>
<td></td>
<td>(.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1096</td>
<td></td>
<td>so I just sat down</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Legitimation of Experiential Claims

At the end, with the last two lines (lines 1110 and 1111), Eva convinces the listeners that what she has reported must be the case. It does not rely upon her memory. It is just a logical conclusion.

Let us survey the insurance back-ups that Eva gives to her story, engaging almost in triangulation exercises. Eva is eager to demonstrate that it was Boxing Day when she first saw “Jim’ll Fix It”. The teacher has explained that the programme containing her son’s contribution was broadcast on Christmas Eve. There is a potential conflict here. Eva is eager to construct them as two separate programmes, two separate experiences. Eva adroitly attends to potential criticisms that she could have been watching a videotape and that “Jim’ll Fix It” was not transmitted live on Boxing Day but had been recorded on Christmas Eve by her grandma.

Another anchorage point are lines 1104 and 1105, where Eva uses a script formulation (see Edwards, 1994b) to emphasize that the going to Auntie Pam’s was an indicator of the date:-

'cos (. ) my grandma doesn’t have a video:
Eva utilizes, as a warrant for her Boxing Day claim, the cultural resource of aligning it with what she less contentiously knows (because it is scripted) about the rigidity of her familial Christmas visiting and the surety of where she would have been on Boxing Day.

The praxiological, sociological dimensions of cognition, that we observe in this dismissal of the children's memory, have been very greatly neglected in an environment where there is to be found a dichotomous prevalence of Cartesian and 'materialist' ontologies of cognition (see Coulter 1991b). We must view developmental psychology and logic, together with everything else, as practical achievements, ways of talking.

**Conclusion and Caveat**

At the beginning of this chapter I pronounced, with reservation, the intention to leave behind a preoccupation with the subjective, the interpretative, and instead to concentrate on how the object of an experience can be legitimated by its construction as something external to the person, out-there, untouched and unaffected by any stake the knowledge-claimant might have in the recounting of the experience.

Over the course of this chapter I have increasingly found that the former was an untenable position, because it is human cultural interpretation which has to be discursively and rhetorically achieved by our descriptions. The subjective and the objective cannot be thus separated, as is often attempted in repertoire discourse analysis (see Chapter 2). Jayyusi (1991) writes:-

"... the premise (and premised properties) of an objective world is reflexively tied to its intersubjective constitution. In other words, the ethnomethodologist, seeking the explication of mundane social order, preserves within view the properties of the objective world as they are and in the way that they are encountered by the mundane actor/reasoner."  

(p. 169; emphasis in original)

Separating the objective and subjective and contrasting them affords them a reality outside of their roles as mutual warrants in discourse. They become more (or less) than participants' categories. Harvey Sacks' research was often misunderstood in this way, as the two following quotations show, from Watson (1993) and Silverman (1993)
respectively. Sacks’ concern with membership categories and description was considered by many to be a separate matter from his concern with the serial organization of talk. Watson (1993) explains that he (Watson) will:-

“…critically examine the tacitly held received wisdom amongst conversation analysts, namely that around 1969 Harvey Sacks abandoned his concern with membership categories in favour of a concern with the analysis of the serial organization of utterances in speech exchange. Implied in this article of faith amongst conversation analysts are such propositions as that which holds that membership categories do not comprise sequential objects, or at least do not ‘fully’ do so and are thus not amenable to sequential analysis.”

(p. 151: original in French)

“As his address of his data shows, Sacks’ contribution to our understanding of description is not intended to stand apart from his account of the sequential organization of talk.” (p. 126)

So, in this chapter, let us marry together the interpretative, be it general or individual, with the objective and consider them both as legitimating the experience and, through the experience, also the knowledge claim. They both appeal to what constitutes our sense of ‘reality’, together with aspects such as moral and story cohesiveness, as we have seen in this chapter.

I shall end this chapter with a quotation from Potter (1992). In his reply to Greenwood (1992), who is eager to uphold the descriptive role of, say, an avowal of depression, in addition to its social function as, say, an excuse, Potter explores how Greenwood maintains realism in his argument (‘Realism’ is an apt word in this context, as it incorporates within it the human interpretative orientations we have been discussing).

“ This response to Greenwood does not overturn or reject realism in any simple way; rather, it adopts a different kind of approach where realism itself becomes one kind of discourse to explore analytically, as well as one of a repertoire of discursive moves on which an analyst might draw. Realism remains one good story.” (p. 172)

I hope I too have shown how realism can be achieved in experiential claims and have given some examples of how a ‘good story’ in a knowledge-construction context can be manufactured.
CHAPTER EIGHT
THE UNDERMINING AND DISCOUNTING OF EXPERIENTIAL CLAIMS

All our social actions stand in danger of being discounted, not only experiential claims in knowledge contexts, which are the topic of this thesis. In the first presented extract of this chapter, we can see how Clive (Anderson)'s question (line 25) to Jessica, the zoologist, is discounted, albeit with lines 26 and 28 as a token of dispreference (see Heritage, 1984, pp. 265 to 269).

Extract 8.1 (Source AS/CA beg)

20 Right now ( ) (view) first of all
21 but the first question that err
22 >there are lots of animal questions<
23 (right) but err
24 which I think is a great one this one
25 <Why are there no green mammals?>
26 Jessica: It is a good one ↑↓sn’t it.
27 There are(.) is the answer.
28 [ ((she laughs))
29 Clive: [ Ah

The pause on line 27:-

27 There are(.) is the answer.

when she discounts the presupposition that lies behind Clive’s question (line 25), i.e. that green mammals do not exist, is another display of marking her dispreferential answer. This countering of Clive’s question has to be delicately executed, as Clive has invested his own evaluation of the question into the proceedings (line 24):-

24 which I think is a great one this one

Clive does not dispute Jessica’s rebuttal. An ‘Ah’ (line 29), occurring simultaneously with Jessica’s laughter (line 28) is all he produces.
Experiential claims can themselves serve to discount knowledge claims, as Ashmore (1993) shows us in his depiction of how, in 1904, Robert W. Wood debunked the scientific notion of N-rays, which had been ‘discovered’ by Blondilot in 1903. Wood achieved this debunking very successfully by describing a visit made by him to Blondilot’s laboratory. Ashmore paints out for us the rhetorical nature of Wood’s experiential claims and the variabilities between his various accounts of what had occurred during that visit.

**Ignoring Experiential Claims**

Let us now progress to the discounting of experiential claims themselves, which, of course, Ashmore himself does in the aforementioned paper. One of the most obvious ways to discount such a claim is, of course, to ignore it. Here is a data extract from the second lesson on friction, where exactly that is being done. In line 235, the teacher, with her appeal to Jack, discounts Jeremy’s contribution (lines 233 and 234):-

Extract 8.2 (Source AS/F4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>228</td>
<td>Teacher: [ Right why (.) now-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>229</td>
<td>why did snow come first then (.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>230</td>
<td>and not glass?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>231</td>
<td>(2.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>232</td>
<td>Child: ( )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>233</td>
<td>Jeremy: Because I slipped over (.) twice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>234</td>
<td>in the playground.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>235</td>
<td>Teacher: Yes Jack</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This lesson on friction is very similar in format to the lesson on plant growth, described in Edwards (1993), with data collected by Griffin and Humphrey (1978). Edwards (1993) writes as follows:-

“The children were expressly forbidden to indulge in narrative description of what they saw at the greenhouse.”

(p. 218)

and refers us to these lines of data from the classroom lesson:-

Extract 8.3 (Source Extract 2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 32   | T: * * * * * * * 
OK, now. I don’t want to know about what happened in
the greenhouse in terms of what the greenhouse looked
like. Carter, what am I looking for?

Here, in my own data, Jeremy’s contribution (Extract 8.2, lines 233 and 234) is an
evidential warrant for snow’s having low frictional properties and would seem
legitimate enough. However, even when not explicitly barred, as happens here, the
personal anecdote is often excluded from scientific discourse, such as this. This is
especially so when a ‘correct version’ of the world is being constructed. It is ‘false
versions’ which are accounted for in terms of personal narratives (see Gilbert and
Mulkay, 1984). Instead, the teacher prefers Jack’s more causal explanation of snow’s
relationship with ice and slush and, as the frictional properties of ice were ascertained
in the last lesson, hence we can be assured of snow’s frictional properties also.

Extract 8.4 (Source AS/F4)

>Because< snow snow has ice in
↑and (.) if it if it just then melted
it might come (.) into slush.

This talk of combinations and change is more suited to formal science talk.

**Protecting Claims**

In the last chapter we considered how experiential claims were legitimated. In this
subsection I wish to return to much the same considerations but perhaps from the
more interactional perspective of how they are protected from being undermined or
discounted. Many of the concerns we have here will be re-iterations of concerns from
previous sections of this thesis, but from this new perspective. In the following
examples we shall, therefore, view how the claims are received by other participants.
This orientation to how participants respond is the essence of the analytical stance I am
adopting. As Schegloff (1997) states:-

“Discourse is too often made subservient to contexts not of its participants’
making, but of its analysts’ insistence. Relevance flies in all directions; the text’s
center cannot hold in the face of the diverse theoretical prisms through which it is
refracted.”

(p. 183)
Undermining and Discounting of Experiential Claims

He continues:

“But ordinary talk-in-interaction, it seems to me, offers us leverage. The interaction embodies and displays moment-to-moment the products of its own, endogenous mechanisms of interpretation and analysis, both of the utterances and actions which compose it and of the oriented-to context. These are the understandings of the participants.” (pp. 183 and 184; emphasis in original)

However, within this analytical stance, care is needed that the researcher does not embark upon analysis with an ‘a priori’ notion of discourse participation or discourse footing (see Potter’s, 1996a, reply to Leudar and Antaki, 1996). Participants can, as well as contexts, etc., also construct their own degree of participation or neutrality as regards topics and these can be orientated towards in analysis.

Moreover, in this sequential analytic approach, we should strictly examine not only the participants’ response to the narrated experiential claim, but also the storyteller’s response to that response, i.e. whether he/she treats the response as an acceptance or rejection of the claim, and so on. However, in this chapter, with strict categorizational topics, I am analyzing experiential claims and their counters, first and second turns, rather than their eventual fate, third turn uptakes.

Following on from the last chapter and our consideration of the things which are at issue in the construction of experiential claims in knowledge-construction contexts, I shall categorize the subsections accordingly. There will be one on the construction of external ‘reality’, the construction of a detailed, consistent, out-there-ness, removed from people but which can impose itself on them. This is what we understand the world which can inform our knowledge to be like. Such a world can legitimate any experiential claim to knowledge we might wish to make. Another subsection will deal with our understanding that events and features of the world have logical, sometimes causal, relationships, with each other. Thus, by triangulating evidence we can further legitimate our experiential claims. Another will concern itself with consensus and how the construction of communal interpretations can enhance the legitimation of our experiential claims to knowledge (we saw this in Chapter 6 in the subsection on dialogic voicings). A related issue will be dealt with in yet another subsection. If we can show human beings relating to each other in an understandable, commonly understood, way, the events the characters are commonly experiencing can thereby be legitimated and made ‘real’. We shall begin with the appeal to the existence of an
external ‘reality’, this construction of a detailed, consistent, out-there-ness, removed from people.

**Appeals to the Existence of an External ‘Reality’**

The following are examples of how this can be achieved:

**Stake Avoidance or Diffusion**

In our first example of claim protection Jim, a goldfish owner, has been asked by Clive (Anderson) whether his goldfish remembers him whenever he feeds it. Jim is about to claim, via narrative and experiment, that the goldfish does have a memory but, prior to this claim, he protects himself from any accusations of personal stake in the narrative, and in the outcome of the experiment, by reporting the speech of his children. (Edwards and Potter [1992a], at many points in their work on discursive psychology but especially Chapter 5, deal with this notion of stake.)

Extract 8.5 (Source AS/CA4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Line Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>317</td>
<td>Jim</td>
<td>Err the kids tell me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>318</td>
<td></td>
<td>that it recognises me:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>319</td>
<td>Clive</td>
<td>Yeh</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Even though Jim absolves himself against accusations of story invention by his footing of ‘the kids’ (line 317), this story and knowledge claim still might be an invention of ‘the kids’. This is going to be an experimental situation and, if ‘reality’, as portrayed by Jim, rhetorically collapses in the experiment, the ‘kids’ motives and stake could be developed. For now, however, these two lines are an experiential claim warranting ‘reality’ - the goldfish recognizes him - and, related to that, also warranting a knowledge claim about goldfish behaviour in general.

Clive, on line 319, accepts Jim’s construction of ‘reality’ with a ‘Yeh’. There is no discounting at this stage. Later in this chapter we shall return to the issue of, what Potter (1997) calls, ‘stake inoculation’, and, indeed, many of the examples given here could be examined from the perspective of ‘stake removal’. By ‘stake removal’, ‘reality’ as something extra-personal gains credibility.
Undermining and Discounting of Experiential Claims

*Appeals to Human Senses*

Appeals to the senses, such as the following, can protect claims against being undermined or discounted. They give the story, in which they occur, an experienced detailed 'reality'. Eva tells the story of what she and her mother did with some snake remnants they had found:-

Extract 8.6 (Source AS/TS9)

1255 and we took these home
1256 (.6)
1257 and my dad left them out
1258 on the doorstep
1259 and the next morning
1260 they were stinking.
1261 Teacher: Ugh

Line 1260,

1260 they were stinking.

brings forth an experiential expression of repulsion from the teacher (line 1261) instead of any questioning of the truth value of the tale. Eva’s story occurs in a context of a discussion about snake-touching. In her story she displays the feasibility of snake-touching.

*Consensus*

*Co-opting Other Participants*

In our next example Jessica, the zoologist, co-opts Clive (Anderson) into her forthcoming tale about alarmed elephants running across the African plains with bolt-upright tails.

Extract 8.7 (Source AS/CA5)

497 Jessica: something like (.)
498 err have you ever ↑seen (.)
499 you said you’d been ↓out ↑to Africa
She recruits Clive as a mutual participant in her experiences. Clive had been ridiculing Jessica by asserting that she would get arrested in this country if she inspected the back end of animals. She progresses carefully and co-opts him, first of all, into this partial experience of seeing elephants running across the plains, with, as yet, no reference to their feelings or their tails. In the repair, occurring across lines 498 and 499:-

498 err have you ever seen (. )
499 you said you’d been out to Africa

she orientates towards the full picture of elephant behaviour on the African plains, as well as the partial picture, reported as Clive’s prior admissions, of just presence in Africa. She achieves the outcome of Clive’s agreement and willingness to be co-opted on line 502:-

502 Clive: [ I have (. ) um

which overlaps with Jessica’s description of elephants running over the plains.

Now Jessica is free to relate the full picture:-

Extract 8.8 (Source AS/CA5)

503 Jessica: if elephants are alarmed
504 they’ll all hold their tails
505 bolt upright in the air
506 when they run
507 Clive: Yeh=

In her story (lines 503 to 506) Jessica makes no further appeal to Clive. Clive responds on line 507 still as a co-opted participant in the experience.
otherwise of having a broken window in the garage (lines 784 to 787). The others, too, join in with this evaluation, rather than question the veracity of Lena’s story.

*Between Objects and Claims*

In Extract 8.10, Pete, the elder son in the family discussion data, refers, as corroboration to his claim that spirals go left diagonally upwards, to the concrete, present evidence of a self-made spiral, constructed to display its orientation. We can view Pete’s claim about spirals as an experiential claim because the discussion is a collective remembering of a televised Christmas lecture. The nature of spirals is constructed as part of that remembering. Pete co-opts his fellow participants into his perception of the spiral with the ‘you see’ on line 533 (see the subsection on Co-opting Other Participants). This backs his claim that spirals go left diagonally upwards.

Extract 8.10 (Source AS/FD1)

532 Pete: It’s going left diagonally up
533 you see
534 (1.0)

Pete’s turn is followed by a second’s silence (line 534).

From this we can ascertain that ‘first-order’ objects brought to our attention as ‘evidence’ and ‘second-order’ representations, e.g. the construction of the object in the story itself, are ‘ways of talking’, dichotomous ‘realities’ created to further discursive aims. Together the construction of objects and their representations in claims can corroborate experiential claims.

*Between People and Events*

In Extract 8.11, Eva, in the same knowledge-construction context as Lena in Extract 8.9, tells the story of the recovery of keys from a locked car:

Extract 8.11 (Source AS/MP5)

799 Eva: we had to go down
800 to this old (. ) man
801 and we had to ask him
802 if he (.)
Undermining and Discounting of Experiential Claims

and we borrowed a screwdriver from him
and we smashed the windscreen
and we couldn't get our arm in
and we (.) and we took (.)
it took quite a few people
to actually manage
to to get the keys out of the car
't cos (.) we were s
't cos (.)
't cos they w (.)
't cos of where we broke the glass.
Teacher: Um

She includes quite a few people into her story as evidence of the difficulty of getting the keys out of the car (lines 808 and 809) - the 'we' throughout denotes her mother and herself; there is the old man, lines 800 to 803; there are 'quite a few people', lines 807, 812 - a profusion of people to display to the listeners the difficulty of the task. It is what we understand about how tasks are achieved - through a consolidation of effort - and thus the story gains credibility. The teacher responds with an accepting 'Um' (line 814).

Between People, Objects and Claims

In the next piece of data, which, like many others of the extracts, we have encountered on many previous occasions in this thesis, Lena consolidates her argument for a circular rainbow with concrete references to an existing book which, as Lena says (line 558), we can all see, if we so wish. The references to the book are on lines 553 to 556 and lines 558 and 559. Lena, herself, may not have had experiences to validate her claim but her dad could be a witness to the fact that her claim is correct (line 552).

Extract 8.12 (Source AS/TS1)

Lena: No but my dad has
and I've got a book (.)
and it says (. ) about rainbows
>and you can see the circle with an aeroplane
Undermining and Discounting of Experiential Claims

556 going on top of it.<
557 Teacher: [ ↑O↓h.
558 Lena: [ You can see it.
559 It’s called “All About The ↑Ea↓rth”.
560 Teacher: [ ↑Aah

561 Eva: [ ( )
562 Lena: My mum brought it.
563 Eva: I’ve got (. ) two weather books.

Lena also introduces her mother as an extra corroborating detail to back up her tale about the existence of the book (line 562) and Eva introduces two further books (line 563), which could, no doubt, substantiate the knowledge claim. The teacher’s responses on lines 557 and 560 are ones of non-contradiction.

One further extract will help to give an insight into the nature of these references to concrete objects and people. This extract serves to show us that objects and people can be interchangeable in their role as warrants to the veracity of claims.

Extract 8.13 (Source AS/TS2)

642 (That’s) what my (dad) says anyway.
643 (1.4)
644 Teacher: That’s what your book ↓s↑ays?
645 Eva: Umm
646 (1.4)

Eva accepts the replacement of ‘(dad)’ (line 642) by ‘book’ (line 644). She shows her acceptance in line 645. Her initial rendering of this warrant stresses ‘my’ and leaves ‘(dad)’ almost inaudible. Either ‘dad’ or ‘book’ would be a warrant for her claim.

Appeals to Understandings of Social Relationships
As I already suggested at the beginning of this section on ‘Protecting Claims’, if we can show human beings relating to each other in an understandable, commonly understood, way, the events the characters are commonly experiencing can thereby be legitimated and made ‘real’.
Lena, in this next extract, utilizes what we know, as social beings, about relationships - in this case, romantic relationships - to add credibility to her story. This story displays the feasibility of snake-eating.

Extract 8.14 (Source AS/TSIO)

1334 and (.) they cut it
1335 in lots of pieces
1336 and started eating it
1337 Child: [TU↓ggh
1338 Lena: [ this man and a girl
1339 um (.)
1340 boyfriend and girlfriend
1341 (Andy:) ( [ )
1342 Grant: [ ¢I hope
1343 it wasn’t poisonous ( )
1344 (.4)

As in Extract 8.6, we have here a response to the senses, on line 1337; in this case, a response to taste. However, in this subsection, I wish to concentrate on the subsequent part of the extract. Lena’s turn, on lines 1338 to 1340,

1338 Lena: [ this man and a girl
1339 um (.)
1340 boyfriend and girlfriend

sets the scene for us - a romantic dinner for two - the ordinary in the midst of the extraordinary, i.e. the snake-eating. Wooffitt (1992), in his examination of the discursive organization of fact in the narrating of paranormal events, directs us to examine a device he calls ‘I was just doing X…when Y’. He looks at state formulations and the mundane environments in which paranormal experiences are placed in the telling of them. His descriptions of the junxtaposition of a mundane activity with an anomalous phenomenon are similar to that which we have here, in the case of romantic relationships and snake-eating. This normalizing work was first focused upon by Sacks (1984).
Undermining and Discounting of Experiential Claims

This presentation of the ordinary seems here (in Extract 8.14) to be effective. It produces no attempts to discount or undermine the experiential claim, just an inaudible offering from Andy (?) in line 1341 and a subdued wish from Grant that the couple came to no harm with their unusual exploit.

1342 Grant: [°I hope
1343 it wasn’t poisonous ( )°
1344 (.)

Undermining and Discounting the Person

This subsection begins our endeavour to examine situations when an actual undermining or discounting of the experiential claim takes place, or, more properly expressed, one where an undermining or discounting of the claim is attempted or is the negotiated product of an exchange. Throughout my thesis I have orientated my research towards an examination of the claimed experiencer(s), the personal dimension of the claim, and towards the claimed experience itself as an object. Here I shall continue in this vein. The first subsection deals with attacks which operate through an orientation to the person(s) involved in the experience, often the claimant him/herself.

The following will be only examples of how a claim can be undermined or discounted via the person, certainly not an exhaustive list.

Undermining the Creditworthiness of the Claimant (cum Experiencer)

By Mockery

Clive Anderson, as we have seen many times previously, interviews Jessica, the zoologist. At one point they discuss animals’ tails. In Extract 8.15, Clive (in lines 489 to 493) undermines Jessica’s character. Mockery of various kinds can be a way of discounting the seriousness of a claim.

Extract 8.15 (Source AS/CA5)

484 Jessica: if you look at the back end
485 of an animal
486 it’ll tell you much more
487 about what the animal’s thinking
488 Audience: ((laughter))
Undermining and Discounting of Experiential Claims

Jessica is no longer a respectable zoologist; she could be regarded as a pervert, who dubiously looks at animals’ behinds and stands in danger of being arrested. Notice that, in lines 491 and 492, except for the emphasis on ‘back’, Clive repeats Jessica’s contribution (lines 484 and 485). This has the effect of highlighting the contrast of line 493:

- very different from Jessica’s constructed outcome of the event, that it would give the onlooker insight into the animals’ psychological processes.

The audience, with their laughter on lines 488 and 494, aids Clive in this undermining of Jessica’s general experiential claim. The ambiguity of the ‘you’ in conditional claims abets Clive’s endeavour. On lines 491 and 493, the ‘you’ could easily refer to Jessica herself. Not only is Jessica’s character undermined, but also the knowledge claim she is promoting, of tails’ being reliable indicators of animals’ moods.

This type of mockery is not a serious undermining of character, as perhaps I am in danger of portraying it. After all, Clive is accountable to entertain the audience. However, the mockery does detract from the seriousness of Jessica’s claim about the function of animals’ tails.

By the Introduction of Stake

We have already touched on this notion of stake in the section on ‘Protecting Claims’. Before I begin on my own data, perhaps it would be opportune to take a look at Potter’s (1997) writings on the issue of ‘stake inoculation’. Here is part of Potter’s deliberations on this subject:-

“...conversationalists and writers can limit the ease with which their talk and texts can be undermined by doing a stake inoculation (Potter, 1996c). Just as you
have a jab to prevent the disease, perhaps you can inject a piece of discourse to prevent undermining.”

Potter (1997) affords us many examples to demonstrate the ‘I dunno’, ‘I don’t know’, etc. device, a ‘stake inoculation’ according to Potter, among them this extract from the BBC Panorama programme with Martin Bashir, interviewer, and the late Princess Diana. The discussion, at this juncture, was about a book, written before the separation of the Prince and Princess of Wales, which had ‘revealed’ how miserable Princess Diana’s life was with the Prince of Wales. Again, I make no apologies for temporarily moving away from knowledge-construction settings, as these must be seen as ‘ways of talking’, along with other discourse constructions.

Extract 8.16 (Source Part of Extract 1)

Princess: I was (.) at the end of my tether (.)
I was (.) desperate (.)
> I think I was so fed up with being < (.)
seen as someone who was a basket case (.)
because I am a very strong person (.)
and I know (.) that causes complications, (.)
in the system (.) that I live in.
(1.0) ((smiles and purses lips))

Bashir: How would a book change that.

Princess: I ↑dunno. ((raises eyebrows, looks away))

Potter points out later (p. 157) that the Princess’ ‘I ↑dunno.’ occurs at a point where the issue of the Princess’ motives are paramount. There was a widely-made claim, at the time, that Andrew Morton’s book was a vehicle, by which the Princess was getting back at her husband, Prince Charles (and indeed, in October, 1997, after the Princess’ death, the author has been identified and acknowledged as the Princess herself by the formerly purported author, Andrew Morton.). Also, Martin Bashir was addressing such motivational issues in the interview.

In my own presently presented data, as we shall now see, the introduction of the notion of stake destroys the claim, instead of protecting it.

Until now I have portrayed the ‘hardness/softness of glass’ confrontation in Appendices MP1 to MP7 as a children/teacher confrontation. However, one child’s,
Grant’s contributions were often teacher-supportive, affirming the existence of soft glass. The two following extracts bear witness to this:

Extract 8.17 (Source AS/MP1)

585 Grant: [If you melt it
586 it's not

the ‘it’ meaning ‘glass’ and the ‘not’ meaning ‘not hard’.

Extract 8.18 (Source AS/MP1)

596 Grant: [I know
597 what it looks [like]

the ‘it’ meaning ‘soft glass’.

A warning is necessary at this juncture. I do not wish to construct Grant’s opinions as real, static and fixed. From my discursive standpoint they have to be constructed as consistent and this I think he does over the extracts which I am here highlighting.

The main extract of this subsection is the following - Extract 8.19:-

Extract 8.19 (Source AS/NW3)

731 Lena: (that my) brother had a two pee
732 > and (we) put it on the window sill <
733 and (.) say you were right back the re
734 and the window was there
735 (well at first we) ran
736 and the first one (to) get to it
737 could have it
738 and (.) umm (1.0)
739 I was the fastest one [and]
740 Grant [Well of course
741 you were
742 Rest: ((laughter))

Later in this data this exploit results in a broken window.
I wish to focus in on Grant’s contribution on lines 740 and 741, together with the following consensual laughter of the audience (line 742). I would class lines 740 and 741 as a ‘stake introduction’; as I have said before, destroying rather than protecting the claim, the latter being the case in Potter’s (1997) examples of ‘stake inoculation’. Here Lena’s stake in the story’s acceptance is exposed, thus ironizing her story. This destructive introduction of the notion of stake is similar to the famous statement by Mandy Rice-Davies concerning Lord Astor in the Profumo affair in 1963. The statement, “He would say that, wouldn’t he?”, referred to Lord Astor’s denial of impropriety in his relationship with her (see Edwards and Potter, 1992a, Box 7, p. 117). Here Lena is constructed as manufacturing the story, not to uphold the ‘hardness-of-glass’ claim, but rather to construct a superior identity for herself, especially with the production of line 739:

739 I was the fastest one [(and)

Grant’s ‘stake introduction’ has the effect of undermining Lena’s character both as the main character in the story and as the story-teller. She is portrayed as opportunistic, as producing talk rhetorically to suit the moment (an identity construction favoured among politicians to undermine their opponents). Grant’s input also undermines the narrative itself. We, as listeners, ask ourselves if we can really trust the truth value of this tale.

The audience laughter (line 742) is crucial to this interpretation. Without it, Grant could be viewed as seriously agreeing with Lena that, of course, she would be faster than her brother because of superior running speed, age difference, or whatever.

Another interpretation could be that Grant is implying that Lena would run fast if there were a money gain at stake. This interpretation and mine serve the same purpose, of demoting Lena’s character and thus casting doubt on the truth value of her tale; this second interpretation also constructing Lena as opportunistic and self-satisfying.

By Reference to Age

Our last examples of undermining or discounting experiential claims via the construct of the person come from Appendix AS/TS7. Here, in the senses’ data, the teacher has just told the lunchtime children about her son’s, Pete’s, appearance on the ‘Jim’ll Fix It’ TV programme. The children claim to have seen the same programme but the
teacher undermines their claims by delineating their immaturity at the time and their consequential incapacity to remember. These four following extracts display how the teacher thus undermines the children’s experiential claims and so preserves the knowledge (of camera trickery) as her own. The notion of ‘camera trickery’ undermines Lena’s interpretation of a TV programme containing two identical girls, put forward by Lena as an example of the substantive reality of shadows.

Extract 8.20 (Source AS/TS7)

1045 Teacher: Oh
1046 it was a long time ↑ag↓o.
1047 It was nineteen eighty six
1048 How old would you be then?
1049 Children: ((Ohs and ahs))

Extract 8.21 (Source AS/TS7)

1063 Teacher: but I don’t think
1064 you’d remember it
1065 ↑w↓ould you

Extract 8.22 (Source AS/TS7)

1087 Teacher: (Oh)
1088 ↓w↑as it hhh ((laughingly))
1089 you remember ↓th↑at .hh hh

Extract 8.23 (Source AS/TS7)

1112 Teacher: (Yeh)
1113 (.2)
1114 but that would be a lot
1115 (. 6)
1116 a few years after Pete was on it
1117 ↑w↓ouldn’t it=
1118 Eva: Umm
In the last extract, a viewing experience of ‘Jim’ll Fix It’ by Eva is constructed as happening later in time than the incident described in the teacher’s narrative.

The children have to agree about their ages but we saw, in Chapter 7, how they construct a watching of television divorced from awareness but perhaps not divorced from being influenced via subconscious learning. Also, an agreement is reached (refer to Chapter 7) that the children have viewed later programmes of ‘Jim’ll Fix It’, where perhaps camera trickery would again be used. Not an outright victory for the teacher’s sole entitlement to experience wins through.

**Undermining the Experiencer**

In the undermining of the person it is not necessarily the claimant at whom the attack is directed, as can be seen by the next example.

**By Metaphorical Alignment and Mockery**

In this example (Extract 8.24) from the Clive Anderson programme, the conditional nature of the experience affords Clive (who is discussing, with Jessica, the zoologist, the use of animals’ tails in the mating procedure; in this case, peacocks’) an opportunity to question who the experiencer might be and to draw attention to the anthropomorphism employed by Jessica.

Extract 8.24 (Source AS/CA5)

526 and if you happen to have
527 like a (sort of) low number of eye spots
528 maybe you’ve only got sixty
529 in your train (.)
530 Clive: Yes
531 Jessica: you’re absolutely no good
532 you’re not going to get sixty
533 jôy with [ any of the females
534 Clive [ O:h no:
535 Jessica: hundred and twenty eye spots
536 and they think
537 he’s a really fit, sexy male
538 and [ you’re away.
As we have discussed previously, in Chapters 5 and 7, the ‘you’ in the claim is ambiguous. Jessica co-opts Clive into the conditional claim with the use of ‘you’ and ‘your’ (lines 526, 528, 529, 531, 532 and 538). She makes the experience a lived one for Clive, unlike in the case of the antics of the elephant in Appendix AS/CA6, where experience is watching behaviour, rather than participating in it. Clive shatters the claim by bringing to the fore its anthropomorphic character (beginning on line 539). Jessica’s identity as a serious academic is threatened.

Clive not only derides the conditional experiential claim by inferring Jessica’s anthropomorphism, he also casts doubt on the knowledge claim that animals’ tails are used in mating displays and that they are an indicator of feelings and moods. The mocking, ironical fashion in which he carries this out has an ironizing effect and helps to discredit Jessica’s claims further. Clive sends Jessica up and, with her, her claims and examples.

I referred, in Chapter 7, to Soyland (1994) and his denial of any ontological status for similes, metaphors, and such like. Instead, he sees them as devices in our rhetorical armoury, used for persuasion, underminings, etc. My analysis would agree with such a stance.
Undermining and Discounting the Object

As with the underminings and discountings of the person, the following underminings and discountings of the object are examples, rather than a full comprehensive list of devices.

Undermining the Creditworthiness of the Object

As with the person orientation, the object too can be discredited to undermine claims.

By Undermining the Source

The claimant's experiential claim can be accepted but the status of the constructed source of the knowledge claim can be contested.

Let us first look at Extract 8.25, where Clive (Anderson) and Jessica, the zoologist, are discussing the memory span of goldfish:

Extract 8.25 (Source AS/CA3)

256 goldfish are alleged
257 to have very short memories
258 I’ve >heard< lots of people say
259 >oh (but) goldfish have a memory of<
260 two seconds
261 or five seconds (.)
262 Audience: ((laughter))
263 Clive: err this this one’s
264 going to remember to↑night [ for a long time
265 Audience: [ ((laughter))
266 Clive: ( )
267 Jessica: [ he certainly is
268 Clive: ((laughs))
269 Clive: but is that ↓true ↓and ↓d
270 how could you prove it
271 one way or the other?
272 Jessica: I’ve also read the thing
273 about goldfish
274 only having five second memories
Undermining and Discounting of Experiential Claims

On lines 258 to 261, Clive delivers an experiential claim; that he has heard lots of people assert goldfish have short memories. As interviewers often do, he foots the knowledge claim; he has it issuing from other people, not himself (see Clayman, 1992) and hence he produces an experiential claim concerning his hearing of the claim. The object of the experiential claim is the people and their assertions. On lines 272 to 274, Jessica reformulates this. To disparage Clive’s claim, she changes this object, i.e. people’s oral sayings, into a down-market written text:-

272 Jessica: I’ve also read the thing

We referred to Jessica’s identity in Chapter 4 and discussed the tension between her academic persona and her mundane persona. Sometimes she disparages her scientific colleagues, as in Extract 8.26 (in connection with animal humour), and sometimes she treats them as a source of authority, as in Extract 8.27 (in connection with peacock display):

Extract 8.26 (Source AS/CA6 )

563 Jessica: I mean scientists are always very stuffy
564 about the fact
565 that you shouldn’t try and put
566 human feelings
567 [ and human emotions onto animals

Extract 8.27 (Source AS/CA5 )

519 what they’re actually doing (.)
In Extract 8.25, in order to undermine the object of Clive's experiential claim, she shifts from a (in the context, with the presence of the audience) highly valued source of knowledge, i.e. the handing-down of knowledge from person to person orally, and instead she implies that the knowledge came from a low-rated, perhaps academic, text:-

Jessica: I’ve also read the thing

Jessica’s knowledge source is in the singular, whereas Clive’s was in the plural, a consensus claim (see Edwards and Potter, 1992a, Chapter 5):-

I’ve >heard< lots of people say

In addition to the oral word→written text shift, this numerical move also has the effect of downgrading the experiential claim and the knowledge claim it attempts to further, i.e. that goldfish have short memories.

Subsequently, it is Jessica who returns to highlighting and valuing common-sense reasoning and understanding.

and it would be pretty miserable
considering (.)
if that thing survives 'til tonight

Jessica: um it could actually live
'til it’s forty years old.

It is this kind of common-sense reasoning, which is linked to oral interchanges and the production of common-sense knowledge, that we see in Clive’s initial experiential claim. Jessica has obliterated this aspect of his claim to undermine the claim and, through it, the knowledge claim it upholds. Here she resurrects common-sense reasoning, this time to warrant her own knowledge claim, that goldfish possess long memories.
By Highlighting the Object’s Metaphorical Nature

We have dealt with metaphor earlier in this chapter when we considered the peacock/Clive ambiguity as the personal subject in an experiential claim. We looked at the role metaphor can play in undermining claims. Metaphor can also work through the object of the claim as well as through the claimant and/or experiencer. In Appendix CA6, Jessica, the zoologist, is the subject of an autobiographical claim. She narrates how she was watching a television programme and the antics of an elephant are the object of the claim. There is no ambiguity there - not until the following contribution from Clive:-

Extract 8.28 (Source AS/CA6)

600 Clive: [ Yes (.)
601 that’s a sort of err (.)
602 a sort of Jeremy Beadle
603 of the elephant world
604 Audience: ((laughter))

This strips the elephant of its elephantine properties and imparts to it human characteristics, including intention and motivation. He is implying that Jessica’s description of the elephant’s antics is an anthropomorphic one, just as with the peacocks. He undermines her knowledge claim that animals have a sense of humour and he undermines her identity as a serious zoologist, at the same time as he ridicules her experiential claim via the object. The audience laughter (line 604) sanctions Clive’s underminings of Jessica’s claim. Without the audience laughter, Clive could be seen to be making a serious comment about the animal’s intentions to be amusing.

Perhaps this analysis is in danger of portraying Clive as too adversarial. His accountability in such a programme is, after all, to be funny and produce laughter (line 604) by being disrespectful of conventional institutions such as science. Perhaps his metaphorical analogy between Jeremy Beadle (a television prankster cum entertainer) and the elephant serves to endorse Jessica’s claim rather than undermine it, and, instead, serves to undermine the knowledge claims of science. Whichever interpretation we adopt (and perhaps the uptake is not sufficient to separate these two interpretations), we still have an example of metaphor being used to undermine claims.

In the last chapter (Extract 7.39), we encountered Pete’s metaphorical linkage between medication and a key and between DNA and slots or keyholes. There we saw
how Pete’s analogy was received very differently from the one I have just recounted. Here is Pete seeding the idea:-

Extract 8.29 (Source AS/FD2)

1661 Pete: My idea was (.)
1662 that it was like a key
1664 [ and it only fitted um dodgy slots (.)
1665 not normal slots (.)
1666 so it looked for virusy bits

To counter Pete’s suggestion, Dad keeps the medication→key and DNA→slots metaphors but changes the type of key.

Extract 8.30 (Source AS/FD2)

1667 Dad: No
1668 I think it would fit
1669 in any old slot.

Dad does not expose and ridicule the metaphor, as Clive (Anderson) does the elephant→human one. If we look carefully at data from the ‘Family Discussion’ Appendices, we can begin to understand how (not why) this is so. The Christmas Lecture, directed towards children and concerned with the intangible DNA, had itself been full of metaphors. The subsequent discussion among the family members was also full of metaphors. To deconstruct even a single metaphor would be to jeopardize the credibility of much of the scientific discourse which had hitherto taken place.

Clive does not have this problem about upholding scientific discourse. Quite the reverse. His banner, in line with his audience, is that of common-sense reasoning against scientific propositions. He deconstructs science, be it in the guise of Jessica or in the guise of authoritative others referenced by Jessica.
By Constructing the Object as Perceptually Experienced

If the object of an experience is constructed as ciphered through the perception of the experiencer(s), this can often serve to undermine its ‘reality’, and hence its future accessibility. Thereby the knowledge claim is often also undermined.

The next four data extracts all refer to the same object - a wicked double that a virtuous TV character had instead of a shadow. The lunch-time discussion among four children and a teacher, in which these extracts occurred, concerned itself with a scientific approach to the senses.

Extract 8.31 (Source AS/TS3)

865 Grant: [ (It’s) (.]
866 [ It’s just an illusion.

Extract 8.32 (Source AS/TS4)

925 Teacher: So that’s all imagination?
926 People (. ) couldn’t really not have shadows?

Extract 8.33 (Source AS/TS4)

930 Grant: It’s just an (.2)
931 It >was< probably (err)
932 just a: (.4) [ a illusion.

Extract 8.34 (Source AS/TS4)

966 Teacher: Is that some trick of the cameras (.)
967 that they do that?

With their references to perception, these extracts from Grant and the teacher, in the context of a scientific discussion, take apart the object of Lena’s claim - the naughty character on the TV programme, not as just a person, but as a substitute shadow.

The first three extracts attribute the experiencing of this ‘double’ character as ‘imagination’ (Extract 8.32, line 925), an ‘illusion’ (Extract 8.31, line 866 and Extract
8.33, line 932), probably on the part of other television characters rather than on the part of the viewers. However, the teacher, in Extract 8.34, addresses the viewers’ perspective. They are ‘tricked’ by the cameras maybe (line 966). The general perspective of everyone is constructed. Illusions, camera trickery can deceive everyone. Compare this to the very last extract in this chapter, where Clive Anderson’s perception is constructed as atypical and hence the object, a camouflaged zebra, remains intact. Here, the reference to ‘illusions’ and suchlike has the effect of making the objects, the virtuous girl and her wicked double dematerialize and the stage can again be set for a scientific discussion about insubstantive shadows.

By Take-over Bids on Claims

In the following examples only a small detail of the object dimension of an experiential claim is undermined or discounted (by replacement) so that a take-over bid can be made on the claim or, at least, so that a joint claim can be constructed.

In our next extract Pete and Ken are ‘recalling’ what they saw and heard in the Christmas Lecture on the television. Pete is describing how medication (Roger) arrives at the DNA site (see Extracts 7.39 to 7.41 in Chapter 7 for a wider context):

Extract 8.35 (Source AS/FD2)

1700 and he was s
1701 the went along with the protein
1702 Ken: What (. ) the [ sugar?
1703 Pete: [ (did) (. ) Roger
1704 Pete: No
1705 the protein not the sugar
1706 (.4)
1707 protein
1708 (1.0)
1709 Ken: Well
1710 sugar is a <sort of>=
1711 Pete: No it’s not.
1712 Sugar’s a carbohydrate
This is an experiential claim because Pete and Ken are discussing what they remember hearing, rather than what sugar is. They are 'doing the remembering of the lecture' through the construction of the nature of sugar, on lines 1709 to 1712 (as Pete did with his construction of the nature of a spiral in Extract 8.10). Ken introduces the word 'sugar' in line 1702. Pete, in line 1705, interprets this as a take-over bid on the protein in his story. He emphatically outlaws Ken's contribution:

1704 Pete: No
1705 the protein not the sugar
1706 (.4)
1707 protein
1708 (1.0)

Ken then attempts to construct a joint claim:

1709 Ken: Well
1710 sugar is a <sort of>=

by categorizing sugar as a kind of protein, but this is firmly rejected:

1711 Pete: No it's not.
1712 Sugar's a carbohydrate

The claim still belongs to Pete and Pete alone.

We can also see an example of a take-over bid on the object in our next extracts, Extracts 8.36 and 8.37, which are also from the Family Discussion and are extracted from a part of that discussion which is concerned with McDonald's milkshakes (see Extracts 7.49 and 7.50 in Chapter 7 for a wider context). McDonald's milkshakes are given as an indeterminate between food and drink, not like the usual concept of a drink. In Extract 8.36, Pete describes the indigestibility of a McDonald's milkshake in London:

Extract 8.36 (Source AS/FD3)

2564 Pete: I've never had
Undermining and Discounting of Experiential Claims

Mum then substitutes Pete’s McDonald’s milkshakes with the ‘really thick ones’ (line 2574) Ken allegedly has had:

Extract 8.37 (Source AS/FD3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Speech Act</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2573</td>
<td>Mum: [ He’s had worse (.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2574</td>
<td>He’s had really thick ones.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2575</td>
<td>(.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2576</td>
<td>Dad: ( ) that was</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2577</td>
<td>Pete: Are &gt;you&lt; trying to say</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2578</td>
<td>McDonald’s ↓aren’t?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dad, who has made the claim about Pete’s consumption of the milkshake in the first place, rejects this attempt at substitution (line 2576) and Pete, in lines 2577 and 2578, challenges Mum and asks if she is denying the thickness of McDonald’s milkshakes (even though we do not know the brand[s] Ken has allegedly consumed). Pete and Dad go on to construct the awesomeness and consistency of McDonald’s milkshakes, as we saw in Chapter 7. The take-over bid has failed.

**Object and Person Undermining and Discounting**

Conversation analysis and discourse analysis regard talk as a sequential process and I would now like to examine a fairly long sequence where object and person constructions in experiential claims are assembled and dismantled in order to support and ‘attack’ knowledge claims. This perhaps will create a better understanding of how these moves occur. If you view the procedure as almost like a game of football with attempts to goal-score, you will not be far off the mark.

The sequence is from the interchange on the TV programme between Clive Anderson and Jessica, the zoologist.

Extract 8.38 (Source AS/CA2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Speech Act</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>159</td>
<td>Clive [ ( ) (right)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>160</td>
<td>like zeb zebras</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Jessica: 'absolutely'

Clive: are dead difficult to see

Jessica: like

Clive: umm

Audience: ((laughter))

Jessica: you-

Clive they're white, black

Jessica: you can't [ see them ((Audience laughs))

Clive: [ If you look (. )

Jessica: [ you can hardly see that there

Clive: can you)[

Jessica: [ If you look at a zebra (. )

If you look at a zebra like that

or a [ zebra in a zoo

Clive: [ Yeh

Jessica: then yeh it's really easy to see.

Clive: [ Yeh

Jessica: [ (if) you look at a zebra

out on the plains in Africa

against that shimmering heat haze

Clive: Yeh

Jessica: it almost disappears [ because it's ( )

Clive: [ Well I've heard that

but I've been to the plains of Africa

and th they're the ones

Jessica: you spot straight away [ ( )

Audience: [ ((laughter))

Clive: Look at that wonderful camouflaged zebra

[ a hundred miles away > you can see it <

Jessica: [ You've obviously got (. )

Jessica: very good [ binoculars ((said laughingly))

Clive: [ ((laughs))

Clive: Very good

alright.
Clive’s remarks, especially in the first half of this sequence, are all ironized. We know this, not from analytical intuition, but by the way Jessica responds to Clive in lines 172, 173, 174 and 176:–

172 Jessica: [ If you look at a zebra (.)
173
174 If you look at a zebra like that or a zebra in a zoo
176 Jessica: then yeh it’s really easy to see.

Clive is intimating that zebras are easy-to-see animals. Jessica formulates place (Schegloff, 1972) in the lines above to allow Clive’s object construction and hers (of a camouflaged zebra) to co-exist. Zebras are now easy to see on pictures and in zoos but on the African plains they are camouflaged.

178 Jessica: [ (if) you look at a zebra
179 out on the plains in Africa
180 against that shimmering heat haze
182 Jessica: it almost disappears [ because it’s ( )

Clive is not content with Jessica’s negotiated settlement. He attempts to take over the territory of the African plains as well, beginning with a dispreferred disagreement marker:–

183 Clive: [ Well I’ve heard that
184 but I’ve been to the plains of Africa
185 and th they’re the ones
186 you spot straight away [ ( )
188 Clive: Look at that wonderful camouflaged zebra
189 [ a hundred miles away > you can see it <
He uses hypothetical direct speech (line 188) and, as he does so, he conjures up an image of tourists pointing out and extolling the beauty of the zebras over the miles of open plain. The common-sense reasoning of ordinary people wins through. The scientific word 'camouflaged' (line 188) sounds ridiculous in the midst of ordinary people's perspective experiences. It ironizes Jessica via its contrast with 'Look at' (also line 188). How can one 'look at' something which is camouflaged?

At this point Jessica moves away from the object itself, the zebra, and focuses instead on Clive, as experiencer. She can do this because Clive has constructed himself as experiencer on line 184. She constructs a Clive that makes him different from the general mass of people sightseeing in Africa:-

190 Jessica: [ You've obviously got (. )
191 very good [ binoculars ((said laughingly))

Most people would just be using normal eyesight or cheap binoculars. Clive possesses binoculars of superior vision. Jessica can turn her attention to a perceptual aid because the whole discussion has been about how zebras are perceived.

Clive concedes. He has had his laugh. If he was seriously disputing with Jessica he could, with his legal training, easily have disputed the quality of his binoculars or even their existence. The next three lines show the game-like quality of the interaction:-

192 Clive: [ ((laughs))
193 Clive: Very good
194 alright.

The goal has been scored; the laugh with the audience. We return to the centre line.

Clive’s experience has not been entirely discounted but Jessica’s knowledge claim has triumphed; that zebras are camouflaged on the African plains.

On a light note we can see Clive as sending up Jessica’s talk in an interaction with the audience. We could see the irony he uses as making use of various epistemic devices for claiming and disclaiming experiences. This allows us to see the relevance of this extract to serious talk in science, education, etc., where even the irony can play a part too.
Conclusion and Caveat

As we saw in Chapter 7, the separation of the person and object orientations in experiential claims is quite invalid if we are going to view talk as endogenously generated and context producing; if we are going to give heed to the reflexive properties of talk, brought to our notice by ethnomethodologically inspired conversation/discourse analysts. In Chapter 7 we saw how appeals to human interpretation could be discovered in the object formation of claims. In an ethnomethodological study it can be seen how the person, once indexed, is often attended to in object constructions and vice versa. Here it is much the same story. With terms such as ‘illusion’ forming the object dimension of claims (Extracts 8.31 and 8.33), how can we cut off the personal dimension? Such separation is more for linguistic analysis than for ethnomethodological pursuits. Linguists love to induce grammatical forms into their analyses right from the start (see the beginning of Chapter 5 of this thesis). It is my belief that, with such a synchronic, as opposed to diachronic study of language, we should do as little ‘a priori’ structuring of participants’ talk as possible.

However, having said all this, I am not ashamed of my constructions. I consider this chapter and the previous chapter to have been formatted rather deftly using this device. I too am allowed my rhetoric. Nevertheless, it does behove me, in a thesis such as this, to reveal my rhetoric (see Reflexivity in Chapter 2). The argument throughout this thesis is against rigid, static agency and passivity constructions from many analysts who deal with education and knowledge. Here I have adopted their positions to attack not only their conclusions but their starting assumptions. I have shown person and object constructions not to be of this portrayed ilk; they are much more ephemeral. They are built up and knocked down continually in moment-to-moment interaction. Also, there is not essentially a strong divide between them. They have many rhetorical similarities, both having potential for legitimating and de-legitimating claims. They feed into each other, as we have seen already. Our study is of social, human interaction and it would be surprising if the personal did not weave itself throughout. Persons will also objectify themselves and others and also objects will sometimes be animated or linked to interpretation.

My conclusions in both Chapter 7 and Chapter 8 are primarily caveats, deconstructions of my own analytical arrangements. I shall, therefore, stress again that this is not a failing on my part. My analytical arrangements could have been conducted
in other ways but they would still have been criticizable from this perspective. The participants do not have my concerns about the way persons and objects are constructed in traditional research and I do have those concerns. Back to my format - I do not see how it could be any other way than that one’s academic concerns will be evidenced in one’s format. Schegloff (1997) would seem to think otherwise, but I do not consider he is valid to think he can stand apart from human discourse, a god-like figure in a ‘sine me’ (without me) position.

Having said that, I do not believe in having one’s own too rigid agenda, an axe to grind. I hope I sat back and let my data and my participants talk to me (see Extract 7.28 and the surrounding text in Chapter 7 for a discussion of the type of construction I am using here) and I was eager that my analysis took shape late in my research process rather than early. Like Schegloff, we can indeed aspire (I am rhetorically separating aspiration and performance) to make our academic accounts endogenously grounded - ‘a worthy analytic aspiration’ (1997, p. 165). I would want to take sides, join hands, with Schegloff, in his confrontation of critical discourse analysis:—

“...their (understandings of the participants) robustness and inescapable relevance is ensured by having subsequent moments in the trajectory of the interaction grounded in those very understandings, and built on them.” (p. 184)

From this point of view we cannot claim, as analysts, any separate status for person and object orientations.

Let us now leave the caveat and consider what Chapters 7 and 8 have displayed to us. I have already mentioned the flexibility of person and object constructions in my data. From this analytic standpoint, there is no permanent, essential status of these that is capturable and about which we can complain, in terms of, for example, people’s passivity, institutional object’s domination, etc. Also, talk does not, in essence, empower some people and disempower others. Claims can be legitimated, but also undermined, discounted, deconstructed. Talk allows us to do that. It is a wonderful, internally generated machine, driven forward sequentially by attendance to accountabilities, positionings, sensitivities to culture, awareness of participants’ stances, etc. My analytic stance does not presume inequalities prior to analysis. Indeed, individuals are part of the constructions rather than the talk generators. By legitimations of experiential claims (Chapter 7), knowledge positions can be upheld and by their discreditation (Chapter 8), knowledge positions can be simultaneously undermined.
CONCLUSION
or
I REST MY CASE

The appendage to the title of this section will, I hope, perpetrate the message which I have endeavoured to convey throughout this thesis; that mine too is a rhetorical venture, like any other. My message is an argument, not a truth.

This concluding section will be fairly short. However, it will not be as short as it might have been if I had modelled myself on Jessica in Appendix AS/CA6:-

598 Jessica: If that doesn’t display a sense of humour
599 [ I don’t know what does

I perhaps might have written:-

If that doesn’t display experiential claims
to knowledge
I don’t know what does

and left it at that. In a doctoral thesis, however, this would scarcely be sufficient. Some cogitation about the cohesiveness, importance, uniqueness of the thesis, yet its orientation to existent research approaches, is called for. A synopsis of the main points, together with a gloss on the findings, has to be tendered. A discussion of how the findings can be used and applied is expected.

Methodological Cohesiveness and Links with Existent Research Approaches

Throughout this thesis I have emphasized the manufactured nature of categorizations and dichotomies. I myself have built up my thesis on the framework of a distinction between the personal orientation of an experiential claim and the objective. Latterly, I have tried to dissemble this notion by concluding that these should be participants’ categories, ‘ways of talking’, not ‘a priori’ ‘realities’. I am not apologizing for constructing these two dimensions and I am certainly not going to begin the thesis again without them. I would only construct different analytical dimensions. For myself, as an analyst in an argument, these dimensions of person and object which I constructed were relevant. They were constructed to oppose traditional stances which make issues out of participant agency and passivity as ‘real’ concerns, even if these
issues are not orientated to by participants. It is no use denying, though, that they were constructed on an analysts’ level, not a participants’ level.

I have drawn attention, reflexively and repeatedly, to my own rhetorical position, but have pointed out that even that degree of reflexivity, in the context of this thesis, is a warrant for my thesis, and even pointing this out is a discursive move.... and so on, ad infinitum - and yet not. However, if we rely on ‘pointing out’, reflexivity, in this thesis, would remain largely unexplored. The reflexivity is, to a great extent, embedded in the way the whole thesis is written. This, in itself, may need ‘pointing out’.

I have drawn upon the ethnomethodological principles of indexicality and reflexivity to explain how talk is contextually generated and, once generated, becomes part of that context. Personal and objective orientations in experiential claims feed into and play off against each other (see the Conclusions of Chapters 7 and 8). Once indexed, they together become part of the context, neutrally aligned, until set into partnership or opposition by talk. They are not dichotomous in their essence but can be made so in talk, as they indeed are in many analytic stances which emphasize agency as opposed to structural control, Fate, manipulation, victimization, etc., or vice versa. Personal and objective orientations can join hands to legitimate experiential and knowledge claims or they can wage war to uphold opposing ideologies. From the point of view of this version of conversation analysis, discourse analysis and ethnomethodology they are not separate. They are combined and labelled as ‘indices’, ‘talk’, ‘context’, ‘devices’, ‘resources’, etc. Schegloff (1997) writes:-

“The interaction embodies and displays moment-to-moment the products of its own, endogenous mechanisms of interpretation and analysis, both of the utterances and actions which compose it and of the oriented-to context.” (p. 183)

This unites the so-called person and object of the experiential claim.

To achieve a further ‘feel’ for this ethnomethodological concept of reflexivity, take a look at this quotation from Watson (1997), in which he considers the reflexive properties of a map in use:-

“...the map-as-used may be said to exhibit reflexive properties in that it describes (e.g. ‘foregrounds’) various points en route to a destination but is, in turn, described (specified, revised, etc.) by those points as they are found.”

(p. 95: emphasis in original)
Another deconstruction of the traditional mapping metaphor of one-to-one correspondence between reality and representation can be found in Edwards (1997):-

"...it turns out that mapping is ... more like pragmatic natural language than the pursuit of literal correspondences.

... The map use becomes like situated language use, relying on indexicality and whatever action/journey, from an infinite range of possibilities, it is being used for.” (pp. 226 and 227)

From this idea of the indexicality of the map, we progress to the idea of reflexivity; that the map-in-use is constantly reconstituted through the action for which it has been produced.

**My Methodological Niche**

My method, then, has utilized various aspects of conversation analysis, discourse analysis and ethnomethodology and I have orientated myself to viewing talk as a locally situated social practice. However, many aspects of conversation analysis, discourse analysis and ethnomethodology are not relativist, as I hope my approach has been. It is not that they are expressly realist. The relativist/realist divide is just not one they construct.

In this thesis I was eager to dissemble all ‘realities’ and leave no bottom-line, so that everything has to be seen to be constructed. This is not practically possible, of course. Even though my principled position has been constructed as relativist, in my thesis there will be many realist statements (I can see a lot jumping out of this paragraph), many allusions to cultural aspects of our social life, which are treated as commonly understood, etc. I make no apologies for these, as I make it clear that my stance too is, of necessity, a rhetorical one. I also make no apologies for any variabilities in my argument. If talk is contextually produced then, of necessity, the things-to-which-we-must-attend will not stay constant.

**Uniqueness**

My methodological niche described in the last paragraph cannot be constructed as affording me uniqueness. Many names from my references, set out later in this thesis, would display that same relativist orientation (especially Edwards, Ashmore and Potter, 1994, with their deconstruction of realist arguments).
Conclusion

No, I shall have to search for (or construct) my uniqueness elsewhere. Let us, therefore, look away from my methodological orientation towards the topic of my research. As far as I am aware, experiential claims in knowledge contexts have not been researched so extensively before.

Importance

Now that I have constructed my uniqueness, we have to turn to the importance of the topic. If researchers have not previously turned their attention to this area of study, perhaps the reason for that could be assumed to be its triviality.

The educational research field proliferates with studies into the social worlds, the psychological worlds, the language of teachers and pupils and into the kinds of knowledge produced in educational spheres. The main research procedure is to ask a question, investigate the ‘truths’, connected to your question and then advise as to the educational implications of the ‘truths’ you have discovered. In this kind of research issues of power are often addressed, either explicitly or implicitly. Argument is followed by counter-argument. A ‘discovery’ of teacher domination is countered by studies ‘revealing’ pupil participation, e.g. Galton, Simon and Croll (1980) stress that schools are essentially didactic institutions where children are socialized, whereas Mehan (1979) and Griffin and Mehan (1981) stress the negotiation of meaning between pupil and teacher. (This latter argument is one to which I could be hugely sympathetic, if it were not regarded from this fixed notion of school structures.) Structures and dichotomies are usually all-important to these arguments - e.g. pupil/teacher; social/psychological; in-school experiences/out-of-school experiences; domination/subordination; true knowledge/false knowledge; truth/lies. As the research relies upon this assumption of structures, the finding, the end product of the research is not viewed as temporary, context-specific. Instead, it is viewed as permanent and generally applicable in schools.

Discourse studies usually regard discourse as being part of those school structures (e.g. Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975). School discourse would not be viewed as existing outside of its classroom settings. Teacher control, domination can be studied by an examination of its structures.

Some studies concentrate on ‘difference’. Based again around the pupil/teacher dichotomy, they look at misalignments of the two sides - in their use of language, their interpretative stances, their views of knowledge, etc. Barnes (1976) sees discourse
structures within schools, based upon teachers’ pre-determinations and which enable
the teacher to maintain control, as an impediment for the introduction of pupil frames
of reference.

In all of these studies there is a bottom-line of truth - a belief in true knowledge,
a belief in power structures, a belief in psychological processes, a belief in social
structures, etc. Sometimes one of these is afforded a ‘reality’ beyond the rest and in
pride of place as explaining them. In the midst of all this, there is often an effort to gain
a purchase on ‘real’ issues concerning ‘knowledge’, ‘experience’, ‘passivity’, ‘agency’,
etc.

Instead of all this, I have looked at the way these things are constructed
situationally, against a backdrop of no ‘a priori’ ‘realities’. Realities are approached as
only what is constructed by participants ‘in situ’, nothing else. For instance, I do not
evaluate the credibility of their narratives, but rather, I examine how credibility is a
worked-up feature of them.

In traditional educational research, there are many ‘hidden realities’ - social
upbringing, psychological processes, intelligence, language development, etc.
Researchers try and tease out generalizations about these and correlate them one to
another. In my research, unless the participant relevances, say, intelligence, I leave it
alone. Perhaps the only exception to this is the explication of cultural assumptions and
it behoves me to be greatly reflexive about my referencing of these. I often show how
the participant is orientating to cultural norms, sometimes on a macro level as well as
micro and his/her accountability towards them. Fortunately, the inferences the
researcher makes about the discourse are often shown to be similar to those made by
participants in the uptake. However, I do avow that I too construct a rhetorical
argument and even pointing out my realist assumptions is itself a rhetorical move.

This, then, is the importance of my work - an alternative approach, a counter-
argument against the proliferation of research in the traditional mould. As participants
framing arguments and counter-arguments (Billig, 1987) these researchers can be
viewed as authentically employed; as analysts maintaining authoritarian stances under
the guise of ‘truth’ in oppositional confrontation, they are worthy of deconstruction.

**Findings**

Findings? Um, that’s a tricky one. The word conjures up a vision of a world of realities
just waiting to be discovered.
Conclusion

I throw my research morsel into two arenas: first, the ethnomethodological discourse arena which I hope and expect will be welcoming towards it; secondly, the educational research arena, who will, I fear, leave it untasted, classing it as ‘reactionary’. As can be seen in my previous subsection, educational research rejoices in end products, around which education can be ‘improved’ and ‘reformed’. As also can be seen by my previous subsection, my concentration is on a process rather than a product. If there is an end product to the research, it is to tell us that reaching out for end products is an untenable position. End products are participants’ categories, not analysts’. My work deconstructs the work of many educational researchers who have absolute realist ideas about children’s (or anyone else’s) knowledge and experience. In its place it puts an alternative model, showing the construction of knowledge and experience through talk (and not in an ‘a priori’ fashion being possessed by individuals and issuing from them). This alternative model is forwarded, not as a truth, but as an argument.

Classroom discourse has previously been approached from this standpoint. Edwards and Mercer (1987) had elements of this approach in their study into how understandings developed in the classroom and, since then, Edwards has developed ideas on conceptualizations and other aspects of discursive psychology (e.g. Edwards 1990a, 1990b, 1993). His work on memory (Middleton and Edwards, 1990; Edwards and Middleton, 1986a, 1986b, 1987, 1988) and aspects of his book on cognition (Edwards, 1997) also give us much insight into how we should view talk in classrooms. His book entitled ‘Discursive Psychology’ (Edwards and Potter, 1992a), although centring around political discourse, has much to offer to those who study classrooms.

The Potential Contribution and Applicability of My Research

Educationalists will be eager to hear what exactly my research has to offer classrooms, as, within the framework of pure conversation/discourse analysis, many may feel that conclusions are merely deconstructive, rather than constructive. I myself feel that my research is both original and constructive. So stepping, for the moment, outside of my research methodology, and constructing subjects, objects, and the like, I would say that children, like the rest of us, e.g. in courts of law, scientific circles, etc., have to invoke an experiential basis for knowledge claims This involves constructing the nature of experiences as experiential and particular, but also as having a general significance beyond the particular. They have to fit experiential claims into narratives and into both
Conclusion

everyday and technical vocabularies. They have to incorporate them into explanations. Experiences only thus become relevant, social and parts of discourse practices. Through all this, explanations get built into descriptions and into the world. This is not only a feature of classroom talk, but a feature of everyday accountability.

The emphasis in education needs to be taken away from structural dichotomies, such as teacher/pupil, subject/object, often with the notion of the importance of experience built into them, and placed squarely on the discourse, wherein structures can be assembled and dismantled situatedly.

Many educationalists would agree with my reverence of discourse but would view its enhanced usage as some sort of pupil empowerment. I hope I have shown in this thesis that such issues as empowerment are inside discourse, not external to it. I hope the reflexive nature of the rest of my conclusion, as well as deconstructing these external structures, will, through discourse itself, constructively and implicitly enhance the importance of discourse in education, as well as in all aspects of social life. Discursive reflexivity can have positive things to say about the nature of language and the important role it plays in our lives. It is wrong to view such reflexivity as negative.

Unlike the ‘cake’ in Chapter 1, knowledge constructed discursively is not transferable to other situations. It is not an end product that can be acquired and used adaptively. It is woven together reflexively with many other social issues and issues of accountability. Education is still seen by many as an acquisitive process with a valuable end product. The process of knowledge construction has to be viewed as valuable in itself, without the end product. As I am still outside of a pure discourse mode, I can say that pupils can be made aware of the nature of knowledge and experiential claims as laid out at the beginning of this subsection, indeed the nature of discourse itself.

Conclusion of the Conclusion

I have dealt with the issues of the importance of possessing a cohesive methodology, well explicated elsewhere in other literature away from the thesis; the importance of having one’s own methodological niche; the importance of forwarding references from other authors in the wider set and in the narrower subset. All this exonerates me against any claims that my work is ‘out on a limb’, ‘eccentric’, etc.

On the other hand I have had to afford my thesis a degree of uniqueness or my work could come under fire from accusations of ‘plagiarism’, ‘a re-hash’, ‘not saying
anything new', etc. I have had to spell out the potential original contribution and applicability of my thesis.

One of my findings, although perhaps a negative one, would be that there are no discoverable truths. So, am I saying that everything in the social world is rosy? Am I saying, like the character in Voltaire's 'Candide', that this is the best of all possible worlds; in effect the only possible world? Am I saying that we should accept the status quo, argument followed by counter-argument, and that we should advocate a non-evaluative stance for any analyst?

Well, in a way, yes, I suppose I am. However, as my tokens of dispreference would display, in a 'social sciences' environment, I would be accountable for such a position and so would have to modify my position.

I have already stated in my Applications subsection that there is not enough emphasis on discourse as a topic in educational research and too much emphasis on structures external to discourse (these structures all being constructed discursively by analyst-as-participants). I shall also construct a participant/analyst dichotomy and state the following:— “It is acceptable for participants to participate in 'in situ' constructions, and analysts too as participants, but analysts as analysts should be more aware of what they are doing, more reflexive and not give undue realist claims as to the nature of knowledge, experience, agency, passivity, etc. They should acknowledge that these 'realities' are constructions, 'ways of talking', positions adopted in situated arguments.”

The quotation marks have closed, signifying my silence. I await counter-arguments. One valid counter, from my point of view, would be that I had erected distinctions between participant and analyst discursively to make this accusation. The quotation marks were meant to indicate this. This participant/analyst divide is one that educational researchers and others have mulled over a lot in recent years and some approaches, e.g. participant observation, have attempted to incorporate the analyst into the proceedings, so that he/she can find out about a hermeneutically valid, rather than a naturally, essentially valid, state of existence. Ball (1984) enlightens us about the aims of the researchers in this methodological tradition, which is linked to the theoretical position, symbolic interactionism:—

“Many researchers who work in this tradition emphasize its advantages in examining subjective elements of social life and the meanings which participants attribute to social situations.”

Ball (1984)
From this stance my argument could be countered and a belief expressed that it was
desirable and possible to combine the participant and analyst roles.

As social beings, analysts cannot indeed be above all the social interaction of
which they are a part, but perhaps they should display more reflexivity. At this point,
symbolic interactionists throw up their hands in horror, because they are noted for their
reflexivity. This reflexivity has the purpose of exposing any misalignment between their
own view of the world and that of the people they are observing. Ethnographies are
important. People’s worldview-making baggage is unpacked. The assumption is that
the participants have a common view of the world, something real, not necessarily
discursively produced, and that this truth is accessible by truly becoming one of them.
In this approach there is the assumption that structures form world views, so, for
instance, all teachers in a school will have a common perception of what goes on there.

My reflexivity is different. Our rhetorical baggage is not something we can throw
off, nor would we want to. It is the only reality we possess. Participant and analyst are
the same in their access to this cultural resource. It is this sameness which we should
acknowledge, not claim, as analysts, to be different from participants and emphasize a
struggle for sameness. Have I lost my participant/analyst dichotomy? Yes, for the
moment, but that is permissible in an ethnomethodological venture. Dichotomies are
constructed and deconstructed in talk. Oppositions and harmonizations have no
existence beyond the talk, at least none that is open to analysis.

It must be said that I can afford to embrace this kind of reflexivity because, in my
construction of situated truths, this kind of reflexivity is a warrant for my argument; in
symbolic interactionists’ search for ‘real’ truths, this kind of reflexivity would cast
doubt on their findings.

Perhaps we should just leave analysts to get on with their business as we do
participants, because in effect that it is what they are (and I am too), but we can ensure
a counter-voice is heard to deconstruct any notions of non-participant roles.

My turn is over. For the present I rest my case.
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