

**10th Conference of the International
Institute for Ethnomethodology and
Conversation Analysis**

Fribourg, Switzerland, 11–14 July 2011

The 10th Conference of the International Institute for Ethnomethodology and Conversation Analysis, with the theme of 'Communication, Interaction, Language, Activities, Practices, Conversation', took place at the University of Fribourg, Switzerland, on 11–14 July 2011. The event was organised through the cooperation of several institutions in Switzerland (University of Fribourg, University of Applied Sciences Western Switzerland) as well as in France (the research lab Interactions, Corpus, Apprentissages, Représentations—ICAR at the University of Lyon 2). The conference had not been held since 2005, when it took place at Bentley College in Boston, and it had previously been organised at such locations as the University of Manchester, Manchester Metropolitan University, Boston University, the University of Amsterdam, and Waseda University in Tokyo. This year, it was marked in particular by the recent passing of ethnomethodology's founder, Harold Garfinkel (1917–2011), on 21 April, which inspired a series of tribute events.

The traditions of ethnomethodology (EM) and its related discipline, conversation analysis (CA), were represented by numerous branches of their development, including membership categorisation analysis, multimodal analysis, studies of work, workplace studies, phenomenological and ethnographic studies and interactional linguistics. Four plenary sessions by prominent scholars in different disciplines illustrated some of the most recent work in these individual branches. The first of these was held on the opening day. Douglas Maynard of the University of Wisconsin-Madison began by posing the question of 'Do EM and CA converge and what's the point?' In doing so, he focused on the notion of commonsense knowledge, particu-

larly how the 'commonsense perspective' is embodied in language use. To illustrate, he examined the problem of the 'switchboard request'—a situation on a landline telephone when the caller asks to speak to someone who is not the answerer of the phone, applying it to situations of sociological survey research. By focusing on the linguistic aspects of such a request and observing the similarities between computer-aided telephone interviews and everyday conversation, Maynard showed how a problem of survey non-response was addressed in a specific workplace.

On the conference's second day, the plenary session was given by Christian Heath and Paul Luff, previously known, for example, for their contributions to workplace studies (most recently the study of interaction in auction houses; see, e.g., Heath and Luff [2010]). In their talk entitled 'Ecology and Action' they examined one particular case of the surveillance of behaviour in public places, based on ethnographic research conducted in the underground public transportation systems of several European cities. They focused on the ways in which the transport employees, with the help of technology (e.g. camera systems), make sense of and manage potentially problematic situations such as crime in this space in a coordinated manner.

The late afternoon of Tuesday, 12 July, was devoted to the Garfinkel tribute events. These events, opened by George Psathas, consisted of a five parallel workshops run by several of Garfinkel's pupils—G. Button (the design of computer systems), P. Eglin (to the question of whether ethnomethodology is critical), T. Koschmann (ethnomethodological themes in Garfinkel's text 'The Perception of the Other'), K. Liberman (Galileo's experiment), and J. Bergmann (breaching experiments). In the last mentioned session, Jörg Bergmann led a group of scholars using Garfinkel's famous breaching experiments [see Garfinkel 1967], in which researchers consciously violate a

norm of social interaction, for example by challenging the meaning of individual utterances in conventional exchanges such as 'How are you?' The purpose of such experiments is to make people's everyday sense-making processes visible. Participants reconsidered this method and discussed the use of breaching experiments above all as a pedagogical tool.

Following these workshops, there was an official tribute in which Garfinkel's students said a few words—introduced by George Psathas—Douglas Macbeth, Douglas Maynard, Michael Lynch, Wes Sharrock, and Yoshifumi Mizukawa. The brief tribute speeches focused, among others, on Garfinkel's personality and the spread of his work beyond the English-speaking world.

On Wednesday, 13 July, Wes Sharrock, in his plenary session entitled 'Researching Social Research with Ethnomethodology in Mind', presented some thoughts about how Garfinkel's ideas can contribute to the discussion of the divide between qualitative and quantitative research, reflecting on the methods discussed in Garfinkel's 1967 book *Studies in Ethnomethodology* as well as his later work on the relationship of EM to what he referred to as 'formal analysis'. He placed emphasis on the idea that a third methodological approach, known as 'mixed methods' is rather a matter of research organisation than of some specific quality located between qualitative and quantitative.

The plenary session on the final day of the conference, 14 July, was devoted to interactional linguistics, which represents the permeation of the conversation analysis approach into the field of linguistics, particularly areas such as prosody and syntax [see, e.g., Selting and Couper-Kuhlen 2001]. Marja-Leena Sorjonen presented a long-term Finnish research project using data from service encounters in a convenience store, examining the ways in which the verbal design of turns can vary in relation to

the concurrent use of different semiotic resources.

Each day of the conference involved blocks of five parallel sessions, including panels as well as individual papers (118 presentations in total in both types of sessions). Panels included 'Unpacking Learning in Interaction', 'Accountability and Publicity: Accountable Action in and as the Public Sphere', 'When the Analyst Is Not a Member: CA and Ethnography in Crosslinguistic and Crosscultural settings', 'Ethnomethodology and Political Practice(s) in Action', and 'Multimodal Responses to Verbal First Pair Parts'. Of particular interest was the panel 'Teaching EM/CA' (led by Virginia Gill), in which these disciplines were first presented as a topic for students of linguistics (by Celia Ford), then for sociologists (by Douglas Maynard), and finally at the most introductory level, by having students conduct an experiment in 'doing nothing' in a public place (by Virginia Gill).

The conference also included a poster exhibit and four data sessions: G. Bolden ('Interaction in Russian-American Immigrant Families'), V. Gill ('Doctor-patient Interaction'), N. Llewellyn ('How Money Changes Hands') and D. MacBeth and W. Sherman Heckler ('"Modeling Instruction" in the High School Physics Classroom'). The data session, a practice particular to the EM/CA community, typically involves a researcher or research team presenting recordings of data and their transcriptions to a small group, whose task is to engage in what in CA is called 'unmotivated looking' by talking together about their observations of the transcripts line-by-line in order to eventually formulate a research problem.

Through the overall makeup of the conference attendees, of which there were 231, a third of whom consisted of students, it was possible to trace the trajectory of ethnomethodology and conversation analysis during the past half-century. There were

many participants from the United States, as well as from the United Kingdom and francophone countries, and, surprisingly, there were a significant number of linguists and sociologists from Japan (a fact touched upon by Yoshifumi Mizukawa in his contribution to the Garfinkel tribute events). Participants hailed from a total of 24 countries and from a range of disciplines, including (but not limited to) various social sciences and linguistics.

The gradual spread of EM and CA has resulted in a significant number of studies based on data from languages other than English published every year. However, given this, the work remains concentrated in a handful of countries. Though there was significant participation from Germany, mainly represented by the work done in at the University of Bielefeld by Jörg Bergmann and his students, there was minimal representation from scholars based institutionally in the EU new-member states. There was one exception to this, that is, the presentation by Petr Kaderka and Martin Havlík on 'Performing Genre Knowledge: Achieving Orderliness in Television News Production'. Based on ethno-

graphic research conducted at Czech Television [see also Kaderka and Havlík 2010], the authors showed how various employees of the TV station 'make the news', focusing in particular upon the organisation and filming of interviews with respondents in reporting work.

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Conference link:

<http://www.iiemca-conference.org/>

References

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