Participant Observation and the Nonnative Ethnographer: Implications of Positioning on Discourse-Centered Fieldwork

Michaela R. Winchatz[1]

Abstract

Much of the methods literature examines the roles an ethnographer may play while conducting fieldwork (e.g., the "outsider," the "stranger," or the "student"). This article shifts the focus to how native participants may position the linguistically competent-but-nonnative ethnographer during interactions in the field. A framework of three dimensions is proposed to better analyze the impacts interactional positioning of the nonnative ethnographer may have on discourse-centered data collection and analysis. Evidence comes from discourse between ethnographer and informants during fieldwork in Germany.

[1] DePaul University, College of Communication, Chicago, IL, USA

Corresponding Author:
Michaela R. Winchatz, DePaul University, College of Communication, 1 E. Jackson Blvd., Chicago, IL 60604, USA
Email: MWINCHAT@depaul.edu

Keywords

communication, ethnography, foreign language, methods

Introduction

In an earlier article (Winchatz 2006), I argued that the level of the researcher's linguistic competence in a foreign language can strongly affect the kind of language-focused interview data collected, and I recommended that ethnographers use momentary misunderstandings as gateways to collecting even richer linguistic data. Here, I continue the investigation and show how informants' positioning of the ethnographer affects fieldwork data collection and analysis. My goal is to contribute to our understanding of how the primary data of ethnography are constructed during participant observation.

Ethnography as a Way of Heeding

Wolcott (1999) refers to ethnography as both a way of looking and a way of seeing (see also Gottowik 2005:37–38). In discourse-centered ethnographies, it is perhaps more relevant to discuss the ethnographic process as a way of heeding—that is, as a way of paying close attention to the discourse of native cultural group members through the act of active and engaged listening. This requires, as Farnell (1994, 1999) has argued, that the ethnographer move beyond the visual to many other senses. I pay attention to or heed talk that native speakers might not hear as culturally salient and listen for the mostly unconscious filtering of data through a different set of norms of interaction (Hymes 1974; Basso 1979; Ardener 1989). At the same time, however, I may not heed all that is natural or mundane to native speakers.

One obvious result of this process is the nonnative ethnographer's misunderstanding the communication of informants. Charles Briggs (1986:47), for example, warns of the failure to "discern a shift in genre," and that overreliance "on the explicit, discursive, unmarked speech fostered by the interview situation makes it much more difficult to see that an important native metacommunicative event has just taken place." The warning is echoed by Emerson et al. (1995) to pay careful attention when jotting notes to nuances in tone, regional dialectical subtleties, and shifts in genre. Failure to recognize linguistic distinctions or misinterpreting them can easily lead to neglecting data that shed light on socially consequential communication.

Perhaps, the most famous example is Margaret Mead's likely misconstrual of what her adolescent female informants in Samoa told her about their sexual

behavior (Mead 1928). Mead's formal study of the Samoan language lasted just 10 weeks (Freeman 1983:286), and she was apparently unaware of the common verbal ritual of playful hoaxing among Samoans (Freeman 1983). In fact, Mead's naiveté concerning this ritual may have made her the perfect target. The young Samoan women may have positioned her as an unsuspecting outsider, further convincing them to believe they were getting away with their inflated stories of sexual promiscuity. This, in turn, would have fanned the metaphorical flames of embellishments and untruths.

This process of heeding as a nonnative represents a deficit, but it can also be an advantage. The researcher who stands outside the cultural group—not sharing in its norms of interaction or interpretation—can be aware of intricacies in mundane everyday rituals that may go unnoticed by group members.

I follow Davies and Harré's (1990:48) call for a shift from the static notion of the ethnographer's role to the dynamic process of positioning, where "selves are located in conversations as … participants in jointly produced story lines." Like Farnell and Graham (1998:411) as well as others (Hymes 1977; Gumperz 1982; Fairclough 1992; Rampton 2007), I emphasize the social context in which discourse occurs and view "discursive practices as constitutive of culture." Thus, I present evidence of native speakers' positioning of the ethnographer as nonnative, in terms of both linguistic and cultural competence, during interactions (Davies and Harré 1990).

This moment-by-moment process in which speakers engage in mutual role-building is rooted in the tradition of discourse analysis. Unlike expectations for data in conversation analysis (Sacks et al. 1974; Schegloff et al. 1977), the data segments presented here are not verbatim records of interactions. They are from field notes, including segments of talk, written during research stays that lasted 3 weeks to 10 months, between 1995 and 2009, all of which focused on language-in-use among native German speakers.

For ethnographers working in a nonnative language, our clothing, gait, skin color, or hairstyle may give us away as nonnatives. Even if we master these nuances, as soon as we open our mouth, any residual doubts our informants may have had are often quickly resolved. For those of us who have lived in the nonnative culture for many years, small linguistic differences, like prosody, rhythm, and pitch, can call attention to nonnative language and culture competence.[1] Bernard (2006:362) encourages ethnographers to make use of this status using phrases and accents in a way that "gets people into pushing your limits of fluency and into teaching you cultural insider words and phrases." This will help break down barriers and lead to more open interaction, but it will not erase the gulf that nonnative status entails. This leads one to ask: What are the consequences of this gulf for the data collected in ethnographic research?

Three Dimensions of Impact

To analyze these consequences, I use a framework of three dimensions of discourse interaction:

1. The participants: Who is talking to whom (Hymes 1974)? Are there native speakers communicating directly with the nonnative ethnographer 1(a), or are there native speakers communicating with one another in the presence of the nonnative ethnographer 1(b)?
2. The subject matter of the talk: Is it talk about the communication at hand (i.e., metacommunication) 2(a), or is it talk about topics other than the communication itself 2(b)?
3. How the ethnographer gets positioned: Do native speakers *explicitly* position the ethnographer as nonnative in the discourse 3(a), or do they do so *implicitly* 3(b)?

The three binary dimensions are shown in Figure 1. Thus, there are eight possible dimension combinations:

1. 1a, 2a, and 3a
2. 1a, 2b, and 3a
3. 1a, 2a, and 3b
4. 1a, 2b, and 3b
5. 1b, 2a, and 3a
6. 1b, 2b, and 3a
7. 1b, 2a, and 3b
8. 1b, 2b, and 3b

For example, a fieldwork excerpt might reveal a segment of discourse in which a native speaker talks to the nonnative ethnographer (Dimension 1a) about communicative behavior (Dimension 2a), while explicitly referencing the nonnativeness of the ethnographer and thus positioning her or him as such (Dimension 3a). In contrast, field notes might also note an interaction in which native speakers talk to one another in the presence of the nonnative ethnographer (Dimension 1b) about any other subject matter beyond the communication itself (Dimension 2b), while implicitly positioning the ethnographer as a nonnative (Dimension 3b).

Obviously, there are other points of interest an analyst may take into consideration when interpreting the significance of a discursive moment during fieldwork: who the participants are (age, class, ethnicity, etc.), what

Dimension 1a:	Dimension 1b:
Native speaker to nonnative researcher	Native speaker to native speaker (in the presence of the nonnative ethnographer)
Dimension 2a:	Dimension 2b:
Metacommunicative content	Non-metacommunicative content
Dimension 3a:	Dimension 3b:
Explicit positioning of researcher as nonnative	Implicit positioning of researcher as nonnative

Figure 1. Framework for analyzing ethnographer–informant discourse.

relationships they have with each other, nonverbal cues of the interlocutors, and/or what key terms are used by the speakers during the interaction. However, the proposed framework's goal is to help uncover the effects of an ethnographer's nonnativeness on discourse-centered data collection, as perceived and expressed in and through native speakers' communication. The three chosen dimensions emerge as integral to this task.

Applying the Framework

In the following, I show how the framework can be used to help the nonnative ethnographer make sense of discourse-centered data. I illustrate four of the eight possible combinations within the framework, using five fieldwork discourse excerpts and analyses. The data come from my work over the last 15 years on language in use among native speakers of German in Germany.

Framework Application 1: Dimensions 1a, 2b, and 3b

During one of my longer research stays in Landau, Germany, I had been living for a few months in a *Studierendenwohnheim*, or student housing, where young and old students as well as native Germans and nonnatives lived. Each occupant had a one-room apartment with a private kitchen and bath. When the light bulb in front of my bathroom door blew out, I informed the landlord, Mr. Schiller, of the situation and asked him to repair it. Mr. Schiller was a stout man in his 50s who spoke with the accent of the Rheinland-Palatinate region (i.e., Pfälzisch). Mr. Schiller stood on a footstool in my apartment, changed the bulb, and on finishing, looked over to

me and said, "*Na, wenn Sie in der Nacht Pipi machen müssen, haben Sie jetzt Licht.*" Although the force of this utterance may be somewhat lost in translation, it was similar to: "So, now you'll have some light when you have to go pee-pee in the middle of the night."

Turning to the framework, Dimension 1a, this is a conversation between a native speaker (Mr. Schiller) and a nonnative researcher. The topic of the conversation, from my field notes, revolved around the successful installation of a light bulb (Dimension 2b) and not metacommunication. Finally, Mr. Schiller was aware that I had come from the United States but did not explicitly reference my nonnative status (Dimension 3b).

This particular data segment is interesting for several reasons, but the most significant (and bothersome) for the German informants I spoke with falls under Dimension 2: Mr. Schiller's use of children's jargon when speaking with me about my going to the bathroom. As in English, "pee-pee" is not usually said by adults to adults. Rather, it is reserved for adults speaking to children ("Do you have to go pee-pee?") or for children speaking to adults ("Mommy, I have to go pee-pee"). What makes this statement from the landlord even more peculiar is his formal pronoun for "you" (*Sie*), perhaps indicating respect for his interlocutor, in conjunction with "pee-pee."

Hearing this utterance, I was taken aback. Surely I must have misunderstood, and perhaps I did—but the native German key informants whom I asked to interpret this scene (even those who knew Mr. Schiller) were convinced that this utterance was used with me because of my nonnative status.

It is seemingly widespread cultural knowledge in Germany that some German native speakers—some of them meaning well, others with sentiments less kind—may speak to foreigners with a simplified, and at times, childlike language. This kind of talk directed toward foreigners, if not a universal phenomenon, indeed happens in many countries. For most German speakers, this genre of talk is viewed as rude, and indeed it is something more often read about in books or seen in films or on TV as part of a character's or scene's development. Talk used with foreigners often takes on other characteristics as well (e.g., simplified or even incorrect grammar, louder pitch, etc.). In short, it is a kind of speech not readily available for public consumption at any given time and is especially difficult for the ethnographer studying discourse to catch *in situ*. Although Mr. Schiller did not explicitly reference my nonnative status, it was this status that produced the opportunity to hear a type of talk that usually lingers on the boundaries of mainstream speech. This scene was uncomfortable for me personally, but it did give me an advantage as a field researcher.

Framework Application 2: Dimensions 1b, 2b, and 3b

The next excerpt illustrates the effect of the presence of a nonnative, when that status is known to native-speaking interlocutors. Two male laborers speaking in a heavy Pfälzisch dialect worked in my apartment in Landau, putting together a set of newly ordered furniture. The two men worked in the room together in my presence, but I had not spoken to either one during the first part of their time there. One of them left the room, and in the moments I was alone with the second man, he asked me a question. Despite many years of German language training and years spent living in Germany, if my physical appearance had not given away my nonnative status up until that point, my spoken German did. Once I had responded in German, the man displayed recognition of my nonnative accent (Scovel 1969) by asking where I was from. While talking with me, his demeanor changed and his language became more standard and more labored.

The change in his speech pattern did not end there. I noted in my field notes that, when the coworker returned to my room, the man who had been talking with me also talked to his coworker using fewer regional terms and with less of a regional accent than before. Talk between acquaintances or intimates obviously changes due to strangers being present, but in this case there was an implicit positioning of me as nonnative that fundamentally changed the workman's speech to his coworker. The men had spoken freely in their regional dialect before I uttered a word to either of them. My presence, while my nonnative status was still unknown, did not disrupt their natural conversational flow.

In addition to Dimension 1b (native speaker to native speaker in the presence of a nonnative researcher), Dimension 2b is also at work, as the two German speakers did not address my or their communication during the conversation but instead talked about the intricacies of assembling the furniture. Finally, this interaction represents an implicit positioning of the nonnative researcher (Dimension 3b), in that my nonnative status was known to one of the workers but not to the other, and during my observations, my nonnative status was not discussed explicitly between the two men.

Once the framework has been applied, thus directing my analysis of the data segment to the three dimensions, one may ask: Was it the ethnographer's perceived nonnative identity that changed the nature of the talk between the men as it was conducted in the ethnographer's presence? And, if so, what implications does this have for the ethnographer collecting foreign language data? Naturally occurring discourse between native speakers that is collected during fieldwork will always be affected in some way by

the presence of a researcher; however, the effects may change once the researcher's nonnative speaker status is revealed and taken into account by the native speakers.

Davies and Harré (1990:50) refer to this phenomenon as cultural stereotypes being used as a resource during discursive positioning: "One person can position others by adopting a story line which incorporates a particular interpretation of cultural stereotypes to which they are 'invited' to conform, indeed are required to conform if they are to continue to converse."

Thus, in our scene with two native German-speaking workmen and a nonnative ethnographer, the cultural stereotype of a nonnative who had become a known presence in the setting may have positioned everyone involved differently than before. Exactly what the stereotype is of a nonnative may be difficult to pinpoint; however, it is safe to say that the stereotype may address linguistic competence (e.g., the inability to understand a strong dialect).

Once again, the nonnative ethnographer has access to a genre of talk that may not be readily available for study in most native speaker to native speaker situations. In this case, the genre may display and provide insight into politeness strategies used by native speakers when attempting to converse in ways understandable to foreigners present.

Framework Application 3: Dimensions 1b, 2a, and 3a

At some point in every ethnographer's fieldwork, she or he will encounter metacommunicative discourse of the participants (Lucy 1993)—that is, communication about communication. When an individual comments on another's tone of voice or nonverbal behavior (e.g., "Stop being so sarcastic." or "Why are you rolling your eyes?"), these comments are metacommunicative statements that reveal much about the individual's interpretive framework used to make sense of everyday communicative acts. For some ethnographers, this talk about talk is just one component within the larger complex web of ethnographic data. For a discourse-centered approach to ethnography, however, metacommunicative discourse may become the research topic in and of itself. In this case, the ethnographer's job is to focus on the key terms and phrases used by native speakers about everyday communicative occurrences. This kind of talk can be found within formal interviews, within native speaker conversations, and in spontaneous fieldwork interviews conducted during participant observation.

Some authors question the validity of metacommunicative discourse if used as a gateway to native speakers' understandings of their own and

others' communicative behavior because it may obscure "the dynamic rela-
tion whereby language and context create and reflect social meaning in
spontaneous and unpredictable ways" (Mertz 1993:159). In contrast, Hanks
(1993:130) argued:

> If we assume an objectivist stance towards verbal interaction, then native
> views can never provide more than a deflected representation of the system.
> If, on the other hand, we assume an interpretive stance, [. . .] then we would
> expect native talk about talk to reveal principles and schematic resources at
> play in a wide variety of contexts.

In discourse-centered ethnographies, interactions that reveal speakers'
interpretations of their own and others' communicative behaviors are of
special interest in that they unveil native speakers' communicative common
sense and the speech codes that underlie their everyday discourse (see
Philipsen 1992; Winchatz 2001).

During my most recent fieldwork stay, I accompanied my friend and
his daughter to the workplace of his father in the town of Harthausen, Ger-
many. The establishment was a small restaurant that was part of a larger
Verein or club. When we walked into the restaurant, we saw Frau Meyer,
the 73-year-old mother of my friend, sitting at a table drinking beer with a
rather corpulent man in his 50s. As I walked toward their table to greet
them, the man leaned toward Frau Meyer and asked, "*Und wer ist diese
schöne Frau? Warum lächelt sie so schön?*" ("And who is this pretty
woman? Why is she smiling so beautifully?") Without skipping a beat,
Frau Meyer answered, "*Sie ist doch Amerikanerin*" ("She is an Ameri-
can, after all.").

In this case, Dimension 1b was at work: Two native speakers (one of
whom had knowledge of my nonnative status) were conversing with each
other in the ethnographer's presence. Dimension 2a also comes into play,
for the topic of the discourse was my nonverbal communicative behavior
(i.e., metacommunication). Finally, Dimension 3a was also at work, as the
ethnographer's nonnative status ("*Amerikanerin*") was explicitly refer-
enced in the talk.

This particular scene was extremely interesting to me for several reasons.
First, metacommunication was the focus of the interaction, a topic that I had
seldom encountered during my fieldwork. Second, my nonnative status was
explicitly referenced ("She's an American, after all"); such a direct
referencing by native speakers of my perceived identity was also a rare
occurrence in the interactions I observed and participated in. Third, the

native speakers made sense of a common nonverbal behavior, that of smiling, by referencing a cultural stereotype of an American.

I have a fairly close relationship to Frau Meyer and her son, so after sharing in group laughter, I was able to ask immediately what was meant by the statement. From previous conversations, I had been aware of some Germans' cultural stereotypes of Americans as a people who smile excessively. Although I am not sure it is empirically verifiable that Americans smile more than Germans do, this is of little importance. What is exciting about this fieldwork moment is the insight it provides into what stereotypes underlie German speakers' sense making of particular cultural groups' behaviors. Cultural stereotypes play an important role in how we interact with, think about, and act toward nonnative groups. Because stereotypes are generally viewed as inappropriate, talk about them is often limited—especially when a member of the targeted group is present. My nonnative status did not have to be referenced in Frau Meyer's explanation of my smiling; however, because it was, one could argue that the researcher's nonnativeness changed the course of the discussion in some meaningful ways, thus providing insight into cultural beliefs that may have not otherwise surfaced.

Another incident in which Dimensions 1b, 2a, and 3a played a role occurred while I was at dinner with eight German native speakers. Most of them knew each other, and there had been a good amount of alcohol consumed. At some point in the evening, the 52-year-old male host turned to me and told a joke. The joke was a metacommentary about the uses of German terms of address, but it was told in a regional dialect. The punchline uses the verb *glotzen*—a dialectical term that means "to look." The speaker used the second-person singular form, and pronounced it as "*glodschd*." It should be noted that without the use of this term, the joke's punchline would be lost. Immediately after the joke's telling, the wife of the host explained to him that I could not possibly understand this joke, which he then believed (without asking me) and promptly began to translate the term into a more standard version of German for me. What began as field notes concerning the genre of joke-telling turned into something much more (i.e., field notes concerning (1) spoken assumptions made about a nonnative's linguistic competence and (2) discourse focused on teaching the nonnative speaker a foreign term).

In fact, I did understand the joke when it was told in its original form using the regional dialect. In that moment, however, and for reasons of which I'm now unsure, I did not let on that I understood. Instead, I listened with both amusement and some embarrassment as two native speakers positioned me as a nonnative lacking the linguistic competence to understand

what was going on. Concerning speakers' positioning of others according to cultural stereotypes, Davies and Harré (1990:50) write,

> Sometimes [speakers] may not contribute because they do not understand what the story line is meant to be, or [speakers] may pursue their own story line, quite blind to the story line implicit in the first speaker's utterance, or as an attempt to resist. Or they may conform because they do not define themselves as having choice, but feel angry or oppressed or affronted or some combination of these.

Indeed, the native speakers' positioning of me as linguistically incompetent was their "story line." It was not one that I shared, but not rejecting it gave me access to a type of talk that is not accessible in most daily interactions. In my silence, I felt a combination of the emotions Davies and Harré describe, for I did not openly resist their positioning of me but instead allowed the conversation to be shaped by this positioning. Once again, focusing on the participants, the content, and the positioning allow the discourse-centered ethnographer to unwrap the various meanings within multiple levels of talk.

Framework Application 4: Dimensions 1a, 2b, and 3a

In this final segment, the framework reveals yet another combination of factors at work in the discourse. Recently, I returned to Landau, once again to conduct ethnographic research, this time on a different discourse-related topic. I had lived there 14 years earlier, and it seemed to me that little had changed since then in this southwestern town with a population of approximately 42,000. The superintendent of my building, Mr. Reimer, was a 42-year-old man who spoke the Pfälzisch dialect of the region, though he was used to speaking a more standard German with foreigners who were studying or working in some capacity at the local university. I was in contact with Mr. Reimer for various reasons: to purchase tokens that ran the washers and dryers in the building, to report any problems in my apartment, and sometimes to simply chat. I approached Mr. Reimer as I would any other person in a role such as his—with respect and a friendly distance.

One Wednesday afternoon, I went to Mr. Reimer's office to buy tokens for the washers and dryers. With only 5 minutes until the end of his office hours, I could see he was about to pack up and leave. I told him how many tokens I wished to purchase, and he took my money and counted out the number of tokens I had asked for. In an apologetic manner, I explained: "*Ich wollte früher kommen, aber ich war heute ziemlich beschäftigt*" ("I wanted to come earlier, but I've been pretty busy today."). Mr. Reimer

gestured that he had the tokens, so I held out my palm where he then placed them. After handing me the tokens, he stroked my palm with his index finger and said, "*Der der früher kommt ist immer froh—besonders die Frauen*" ("The one who comes earlier is always happy—especially the women."). I was rather surprised that a man in his role as superintendent would make such a sexually laden remark to a tenant, but my expression may have been perceived as confusion by Mr. Reimer. While laughing, he asked, "*Haben Sie das verstanden*" ("Did you understand that?")?

Here, Dimension 1a is at work (native speaker to nonnative researcher), as is Dimension 2b (subject matter—a sexual joke—not dealing with the communication at hand) and Dimension 3a (explicit positioning of me as a nonnative). For the third dimension, the explicit positioning occurred when Mr. Reimer asked if I had understood the joke. This question was asked in connection with my linguistic competence as a nonnative speaker and his knowledge that I was a foreigner. Much like the previous example, the native speaker wished to find out if the nonnative speaker was in on the intended meaning of the joke.

Applying the framework to this fieldwork scene reveals several things. Mr. Reimer was in his official position as superintendent in his own office when this conversation with me occurred. Joking between a superintendent and a tenant might count as within the realm of normal interactional options, but telling an explicit sexual joke is something that might happen, if at all, only between intimates in a private setting. Beyond this, Mr. Reimer not only told a sexual joke to me in a business setting but also nonverbally made a sexual gesture by stroking my palm with his index finger. It is safe to say, in this day and age, that sexual joking and nonverbal sexual advances between two acquaintances within a business relationship is most often viewed as taboo.

My analysis was that Mr. Reimer's positioning of me as a nonnative was the primary gateway for this verbal and nonverbal, sexually explicit (and taboo) behavior. In fact, when I relayed this story to German informants and friends, most were appalled. All were adamant that Mr. Reimer would have never tried either the joke or the nonverbal sexual gesture with a German female tenant because of the professional trouble such an attempt most likely would have resulted in.

I was also surprised to discover that many Germans I spoke with felt I had most likely been too trusting and friendly toward Mr. Reimer in my few interactions with him. In fact, my supposed American tendency to smile too much was once again referenced and viewed as one of the possible reasons Mr. Reimer took such liberties. I was also warned that I needed to

watch such men as Mr. Reimer and that such perverted behavior was a typical part of men in these types of jobs (e.g., quoted in my field notes as "*so ein perverses Verhalten gehört dazu*").

Whether or not this statement is true, it illustrates two cultural stereotypes at work: (1) that of a superintendent in Germany (and the kind of behavior one can expect from a person in this line of work) and (2) that of Americans (who, at least for some Germans, are known to act extremely friendly and smile excessively). I was not only positioned as a nonnative by Mr. Reimer, I was also positioned as a nonnative (by informants and friends) as part of the subsequent explanation concerning why the event may have happened. Thus, my nonnative status opened a variety of discursive doors that may otherwise have remained hidden. If I had not been positioned as a nonnative by Mr. Reimer, I may have never been privy to this kind of sexual joking/come on—a discursive genre that could potentially reveal much about gender issues, sexual politics, and even socioeconomic status within Germany.

Discussion and Conclusion

Within the fieldwork research literature, there have been numerous roles ascribed to the ethnographer. From "student" to "stranger," "friend" to "outsider," the ethnographer's identity in the field is all important for both the process and the product of data collection. In the current study, I examine the implications and effects discursive positioning of the ethnographer as a nonnative may have on discourse-centered data collection and analysis. In addition, I have introduced a framework of three dimensions to assist in the examination of discourse-centered data in the field. I have provided five fieldwork discourse excerpts and in-depth analyses of each, in order to display four of the eight possible combinations within the framework.

To recap: Dimension 1 indicates whether the native speakers were conversing directly with the nonnative ethnographer (1a) or whether the native speakers were conversing with one another in the presence of the nonnative ethnographer (1b). Dimension 2 concerns itself with the subject matter of the talk, in particular, whether the talk was metacommunication, that is, a metacommentary about the communication in that moment (2a), or whether the talk focused on subject matter beyond the momentary communicative behavior (2b). Finally, Dimension 3 indicates whether the native speakers' positioning of the nonnative ethnographer was explicit or direct during the interaction (3a) or whether the positioning of the nonnative ethnographer was implicit or indirect (3b). It is virtually impossible for the linguistic

ethnographer to separate the dimensions during the process of conducting fieldwork. However, the framework, even with its artificial separations and distinctions between dimensions, becomes a helpful tool for the fieldworker whose nonnative status may affect the communicative behavior she or he collects, analyzes, and interprets.

Ultimately, it becomes difficult to isolate what speech is affected by the ethnographer's nonnative status as opposed to locating other components affecting the nuances of the talk, such as gender, socioeconomic status, age, and so on. Ewing (2006:93) reminds us,

> Any encounter potentially engages multiple identities founded in an array of competing discourses, each of which may constitute the speaking subject in a different matrix of power, meaning, and practice [. . .] The individual, [. . .] is often ambivalent and caught in conflictual positionings that leave traces [. . .] as the individual seeks to both reveal and conceal at each turn in the conversation.

Ewing considered an example from Kondo's book, *Crafting Selves*, in which a Japanese student of Kondo's approached her with an existential problem: Should he go to school to learn business and take over the family's shoe store or should he become an art teacher? Kondo was quoted as saying, "I was left feeling stunned, for the fact that he would approach me, a foreigner to whom he was not particularly close, attested to the magnitude of his problems" (Kondo 1990:120 as quoted in Ewing 2006:96). In an interesting analysis of this moment, Ewing uncovered how limiting Kondo's interpretation of her identity as foreigner became for this interaction. By pointing to intertexualization cues and countertransference, Ewing uncovered the multiple dimensions of identity at work in this interaction—those of fantasy image, teacher, and American, among others. According to Ewing, once Kondo focused in on her role as a nonnative, she constrained the possible interpretations of this rich ethnographic datum, which limited her ultimate analysis.

Ewing's point—that limiting one's focus during analysis may conceal other possible factors and interpretations affecting the discourse—is well taken, but honing in on certain factors during analysis may just as well open interpretations that otherwise may have been overlooked. The framework illustrated here allows the nonnative ethnographer to take into account how his or her foreign identity is referenced (if at all), how it is used to position the ethnographer during interactions, and what effect such positioning may have on the discourse in the field. Through such a self-reflexive move, grounded in a theoretical framework and

discourse-centered data, the nonnative ethnographer may become privy to tangential or peripheral ways of speaking (Hymes 1974) among native speakers—ways of speaking that may be deemed rude, ugly, or inappropriate by other native speakers.

So, we are left at a crossroads for now. Ignore what the nonnative ethnographer's status means for the participants and risk the loss of important data cues and interpretive frames. Focus too much on the native speakers' positioning of the nonnative ethnographer during interactions and risk constraining one's analyses, thus losing multiple other interpretations of the data. It is in this delicate balance that the nonnative ethnographer can unravel the factors and contextual cues that influence the collection of a vital resource for discourse-centered research: culturally significant talk.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

Funding

Note

1. I began my study of the German language in the seventh grade. As an undergraduate at Rutgers University, I majored in German and then moved to Germany to complete a *Magister* (MA) at the Ludwig-Maximilians Universität in Munich. I have lived a total of almost 7 years in various cities throughout Germany. Although my German has been described by native speakers as fluent, I am still consistently identified as a nonnative speaker even today.

References

Ardener, E. 1989. Behaviour: A social anthropological criticism. In *Edwin Ardener: The voice of prophecy and other essays,* ed. M. Chapman, 105–8. New York: Basil Blackwell.

Basso, K. H. 1979. *Portraits of "the whiteman."* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bernard, H. R., ed. 2006. *Research methods in anthropology: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira.

Briggs, C. L. 1986. *Learning how to ask: A sociolinguistic appraisal of the role of the interview in social science research.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Davies, B., and R. Harré. 1990. Positioning: The discursive production of selves. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behavior* 20:43–63.

Emerson, R. M., R. I. Fretz, and L. L. Shaw. 1995. *Writing ethnographic fieldnotes.* University of Chicago Press.

Ewing, K. P. 2006. Revealing and concealing: Interpersonal dynamics and the negotiation of identity in the interview. *Ethos* 34:89–122.

Fairclough, N. 1992. *Discourse and social change.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Farnell, B. 1994. Ethno-graphics and the moving body. *Man* 29:929–74.

Farnell, B. 1999. Moving bodies, acting selves. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 28:341–73.

Farnell, B., and L. R. Graham. 1998. Discourse-centered methods. In *Handbook of methods in cultural anthropology,* ed. H. R. Bernard, 411–43. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira.

Freeman, D. 1983. *Margaret Mead and Samoa: The making and unmaking of an anthropological myth.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Gottowik, V. 2005. Der Ethnologe als Fremder: Zur Genealogie einer rhetorischen Figur. *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* 130:23–44.

Gumperz, J. 1982. *Discourse strategies.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hanks, W. F. 1993. Metalanguage and pragmatics of deixis. In *Reflexive language: Reported speech and metapragmatics,* ed. J. A. Lucy, 127–57. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hymes, D. 1974. Models of interaction of language and social life. In *Directions in sociolinguistics: The ethnography of communication,* eds. J. Gumperz and D. Hymes, 35–71. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

Hymes, D. 1977. *Foundation in sociolinguistics.* London: Tavistock.

Lucy, J. A., ed. 1993. *Reflexive language: Reported speech and metapragmatics.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Mead, M. 1928. *Coming of age in Samoa: A psychological study of primitive youth for western civilisation.* New York: Blue Ribbon Books.

Mertz, E. 1993. Learning what to ask: Metapragmatic factors and methodological reification. In *Reflexive language: Reported speech and metapragmatics,* ed. J. A. Lucy, 159–74. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Philipsen, G. 1992. *Speaking culturally: Explorations in social communication.* New York: State University of New York Press.

Rampton, B. 2007. Neo-Hymesian linguistic ethnography in the United Kingdom. *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 11:584–607.

Sacks, H., E. A. Schegloff, and G. Jefferson. 1974. A simplest systematics for the organization of turn-taking in conversation. *Language* 50:696–735.

Schegloff, E. A., G. Jefferson, and H. Sacks. 1977. The preference for self-correction in the organization of repair in conversation. *Language* 53:361–82.

Scovel, T. 1969. Foreign accents, language acquisition, and cerebral dominance. *Language Learning* 19:245–53.

Winchatz, M. R. 2001. Social meanings in German interactions: An ethnographic analysis of the second-person pronoun *Sie*. *Research on Language and Social Interaction* 34:337–69.

Winchatz, M. R. 2006. Fieldworker or foreigner? Ethnographic interviewing in nonnative languages. *Field Methods* 18:83–97.

Wolcott, H. F. 1999. *Ethnography: A way of seeing.* Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira.