

Culture is leaving conversation analysis, but is it really gone?

The analysis of culturalist performances in conversation

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Abstract

This paper traces the ways in which culture has been integrated into linguistic research in the past 30 years. Recently, more and more authors seem to cautiously refrain from considering culture in their linguistic studies. One reason for this cautiousness may be found in cultural anthropology's concerns on the deterministic effects of considering culture as a concept of research at all. This paper proposes a concept for precise descriptions of culture in interaction avoiding the risk of imposing culturalist interpretations from a researcher's perspective. To this aim, approaches from ethno-methodology's membership categorization analysis (MCA) are combined with Judith Butler's assumptions on the performativity of discourse and interaction.

Keywords: *conversation analysis, culture in interaction, membership categorization analysis, performativity, definitions of culture in linguistic research*

Introduction

Cultural identities and affiliations cannot be maintained but by communication. Although verbal expression is by far not the only mode of communicating identities, linguists tend to claim that the analysis of spoken language will provide major insights into the role of culture in interaction. From today's perspective (Moosmüller, 2007: 17, Haas, 2009: 64), Condon and Yousef (1975) have paved the way of intercultural research into the discipline of speech communication. While in the U.S., psychologists have claimed their predominance on intercultural research for a long time (Haas, 2009: 81), linguists particularly in Europe have striven to develop concepts for the description of culture in communication (Busch, 2009). As a consequence, many linguistic concepts that so far had claimed a worldwide and a universal applicability underwent a kind of culture-relativist reform, and linguists who were interested in intercultural communication had produced valuable insights into manifestations of culture in conversation in the 1980s and in the 1990s.

This research on culture in conversation seems to have been approaching a deadlock over the past decade. Many works from current research prefer to either heavily rely on concepts from the heyday of linguistic intercultural research in the 1980s and 1990s or they prefer to avoid insights into culture's influences that are too deep-rooted.

The paper at hand will trace this retreat of linguistic research from looking at culture too closely. It will try to find reasons for this pullback by looking at contemporary debates on cultural theory in the social sciences in general. As a hypothesis, it may be said that linguistic research has followed contemporary critical views on culture in the field of cultural anthropology. Since this turn in cultural theory, linguistic research still seems to hesitate to again follow and adopt alternative ways of integrating culture into their theory. Considering potential input from cultural anthropology, this paper will at its end present a few potential ways for a re-consideration of culture in research that may go "beyond routinizing".

The 1980s: Culture in conversation

Although the rise of cultural philosophy (Cassirer, 1947) actually had been inspired by Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1931) and Russian semiotician Roman Jakobson (Jakobson and Halle, 1956), linguists themselves continued to develop their ideas on linguistic pragmatics in a culture-free atmosphere since WWII. As late as in the 1980s, linguists have started to receive intercultural research, and within the next two decades a wide variety of concepts had been developed to consider culture in linguistics. Busch (2009) has presented a matrix to categorize theoretical approaches on a first rough level: Accordingly, culture can be conceived from a primordialist vs. a constructivist perspective, culture's influence on interaction can be seen in terms of group-specific knowledge vs. values. Furthermore, researchers may capture culture from an etic vs. an emic viewpoint.

To give just a few examples, Scollon and Scollon (1981) listed quite a number of levels of verbal interaction that may differ across cultures. Similarly, House (1997) was speaking of a "cultural filter" that will influence any level of conversation. Ehlich and Rehbein (1986) had developed a theory of "speech action patterns". On the basis of Bühler's (1982 [1934]) theory of field characteristics of language, they assumed that verbal utterances are tied to an extra-linguistic deep level of cultural knowledge. Since this knowledge is seen as culture-specific, Rehbein (1985) used this approach to explain miscommunication in intercultural settings. All these approaches assume that culture is primordially given and that it will emerge in interaction as group-specific forms of knowledge.

Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) addressed the role of culture in conversation from a primordialist viewpoint, too, but they assumed that culture will manifest as differing values. Essentially, Blum-Kulka et al. launched their *Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP)* to challenge the culture-universalist claim of theories on linguistic politeness (Brown and Levinson, 1978, Leech, 1983) basing on speech act theory (Austin, 1962, Searle, 1969). Blum-Kulka et al. showed that there may be universal values of politeness but that they will be expressed through language in different ways. Building on this concept, Spencer-Oatey and Jiang (2003) added that people from different cultures will share the same basic values but that they will attribute different relevances to these values. Clyne (1994) assumed that these underlying values will differ even more – according to Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensions. Wierzbicka (1994) went even further, and from an emic perspective she claimed that values underlying communication are completely culture-specific. However, Wierzbicka assumed that these values will be visible in conversation without any additional disguise through culture-specific communication.

In contrast to primordialist approaches, constructivist approaches assume that culture does not pre-exist but that they will be always be created in situ and through interaction. Some authors assume that cultural knowledge pre-exists but that it will have to be activated and made relevant in a given situation. Auer and Kern (2001) for example present a conversation-analyst approach on these premises relying on phenomenologist theories of understanding by Schütz (1967). Others claim that culture-specific knowledge will be created in a given situation. Examples from conversation analysis to this approach are given by Gumperz (1978) building upon works from linguistic anthropology by Goodenough (1957) and Hymes (1964).

Similarly, the constructivist school has also produced works tracing cultures as values in interaction. Very often, this orientation towards values is based in theories from discourse analysis. The latter can obtain its basic thoughts from Habermas (1983), Foucault (1984 [1969]) or cognition theory (van Dijk, 1977). The contributions in Knapp, Enninger and Knapp-Potthoff (1987) give a multi-faceted picture of how discourse analysis may be used for research on intercultural communication. Other authors claim that values relevant for interaction will always be created anew and in situ. Casmir (1993) terms this process as third culture-building, and Koole and ten Thije (1994) show that constructive interaction in intercultural settings may be based on people accepting discourse positions as cultural experts being unquestioned.

The 1990s: Culture is getting out of sight

At the time when research on culture in conversation had reached its peak, Koole and ten Thije (1994: 61-68) pointed at the fact that contemporary research had established a paradigm that basically conceived intercultural communication as a problem to human interaction. Accordingly, if culture affects interaction, then it will do so by producing miscommunication. Thus, contemporary research had concentrated on identifying problems resulting from intercultural communication and on developing solutions to these problems. This perspective has been widened in the 1990s: Ten Thije (1997: 132) finds a tendency in linguistic intercultural research towards an analysis of constructive and successful interaction in intercultural settings. Ten Thije endorses this tendency with his own work. Poncini (2002: 348) confirms this notion relating to works that are central for linguistic research on intercultural communication, like Sarangi (1994: 411), Meeuwis (1994: 393), both of them complaining the focus on problems and misunderstandings.

While Poncini (2002: 350) more or less complains that not much has been changed on these deficits so far, Bühlig and ten Thije (2006) as well as Ehlich and ten Thije (2010) show that after a couple of years, many authors have overcome the confinement of concentrating on misunderstandings. However, a close operationalization of culture seems to be getting out of sight instead. While authors had warned not to reduce any analysis to causal influences of culture on interaction, more recent publications seem to be afraid of operationalizing culture at all.

A short review of recent publications on conversation analyst approaches to intercultural communication will elaborate this hypothesis. To this aim, a global search on journal articles containing the key words *conversation analysis* and *intercultural communication* has been carried out covering the years from 2004 until 2010. Additionally, a closer look has been given to academic journals that are explicitly dedicated to the analysis of intercultural communication. In these veins, the following journals have been searched for the key word *conversation analysis*: *The International Journal of Intercultural Relations (IJIR)*, *The Journal of Language and Intercultural Communication (LAIC)* as well as the *Journal of Intercultural Communication*.

Some remarks on conversational routines

Rehbein (2006) has established the notion of *routines* in research on intercultural conversations. For Rehbein, culture interferes in conversation in the form of the “cultural apparatus” (Rehbein, 2006) that brings people to different interpretations of these routines. Besides from this, routines are omnipresent in interaction. At first place, the notion of routines seems to be designed to explain processes of interpersonal understanding but not to identify cultural particularities.

Applied to intercultural research in particular, Ehlich and ten Thije (2010: 265) state that verbal communication can be seen as a large set of routines to easily manage everyday situations. In intercultural contact, according to them, these routines cannot be applied properly any longer. In that case, people would need new routines to get the old ones running again. Ehlich and ten Thije call them routine routines (“Routine-Routinen”). Since these routines for the recovery of routines usually are not at hand, people will need some innovation. Instead of merely focusing on intercultural communication as a problem, the authors want to look at the ways people interactively produce new and innovative ways of cooperation. Intercultural competence thus will mean a mindful attitude as well as people’s readiness to see that others will not be obliged to stick to their routines (Ehlich and ten Thije, 2010: 266). Instead, people should improve their hermeneutic abilities in everyday situations (“Alltagshermeneutik”).

At this point, an analysis of the notion of culture as well as of the influences of culture on interaction is no longer needed: Since individuals have to communicatively struggle to understand each other in interpersonal settings anyway, mindfulness will be of use for all of them, even more in multilingual or intercultural contexts. In contrast to this, the following review will show that some authors like Roberts et al. (2004), Jiang (2006) and O’Driscoll (2007: 477) make use of the concept of routines as a basis for a description of cultural influences on conversation. In general however, it may be added that at this point, routines seem to lay the ground for another problem-oriented approach that actually should be transcended.

Review of selected works

The following passages will shortly review recent papers from academic journals treating aspects of intercultural communication from a conversation analytic point of view. For a precise analysis of the approaches to culture, this review will adopt the categorization outlined in Busch (2009) and reported in the first paragraphs of this paper.

Taking intercultural encounters as mere issues of language proficiency

Especially in the field of research on foreign language learning, authors more or less continue to concentrate on mere language proficiency. Although in earlier times, authors frequently had pointed to the need of considering culture in language teaching (Hu, 2006), this plea has not been considered all over the field. In short, some authors on foreign language learning claim their situations under research as intercultural, but in fact, they rely on aspects of language proficiency, exclusively. Culture as an example for a deeper level of understanding will not take its effects. Seidlhofer (2009) for example states that speakers of English as a lingua franca will necessarily need to build their own communicative rules in interaction. Earlier authors had stated that non-native speaker interaction will face the challenges of languages' cooperative function as well as its territorial function: The cooperative function will require speakers to stick to common rules like pre-fabricated phrases that may be termed as culture-specific. On the other hand, language fulfils a territorial function assigning speakers their socio-cultural belonging. Striving at a coverage of native speakers' requirements of the cooperative function for non-native speakers may collide with the territorial functions: If non-native speakers do not completely meet the natives' rules they will reveal themselves as trying but not belonging to the in-group. In lingua franca situations of English however, Seidlhofer states that meeting natives' requirements is neither needed nor helpful. Instead, people will construct their own ways to meet the cooperative function in situ. Mauranen (2009) confirms the idea that mutual understanding in lingua franca settings is largely managed by means of implementing pre-fabricated phrases. Understanding will be achieved if all interactants concerned will be able to interpret these phrases properly.

This notion of mutual understanding comes close to what Phibbs (2007) had termed as "linguaging". From terms of intercultural research, it may come close to the notion of third culture-building (1993) although Seidlhofer seems to consciously avoid this notion. Georgieva (2009) terms the interactive construction of mutual understanding and of transcending cultural boundaries as communication strategies that are more worth to be analysed than cultural influences that would have to be dealt with. In a similar vein, Chiang (2009) describes the process of achieving understanding.

Looking at intercultural encounters without considering culture

Even authors who had considered culture in their earlier works seem to refrain from that notion recently. Kasper (2004) for example previously had participated in Blum-Kulka's (1989) Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project that had been mentioned above. 15 years later, Kasper (2004) still analyses speech acts in intercultural encounters. However, cultural issues are no longer the focal point of her research. Instead, she points out that research on speech act realizations will not be able to trace transformations of social relations within conversations that normally are considered as socially stable. Looking at repeated questions in situations of non-understanding because of non-native speaker's deficits, she points out that interpersonal relationships change over time in the situation: Generally, relationships are getting closer. This can be expressed by means of positive politeness as well as of negative politeness. Leaving cultural influences aside, Kasper in this way claims that interpersonal understanding and relationship-building can be achieved in any situation. Similarly, Palotti and Varcasia (2008) claim that they rely on theories from cross-cultural and intercultural pragmatics, but in their comparison of opening sessions of telephone calls across several European languages they equate languages and cultures.

Culture as ethnocentric routines

Some authors build upon the concept of conversational routines to prove that they are culture-specific and carried out from the ethnocentric viewpoints of their users. Roberts, Sarangi and Moss (2004) for example analyse doctor-patient conversations of patients who are not native speakers of English. From the point of view of interactional sociolinguistics, they assume that a conversation is managed within the

situation. These doctor-patient conversations are characterized by what the authors call “micro-discourse routines” (Roberts et al., 2004: 159): “We will look at the opening moments of the consultation when the patient first reports the reason for coming to see the doctor. These moments when the patient has usually a few seconds or perhaps a minute to present themselves and their symptoms we call a ‘micro-discourse routine’” (Roberts et al., 2004: 162). However, these routines at first hand are not defined from a culturalist perspective. But then, the authors point at the fact that many non-native speakers will not be able to make use of these routines. Doctors in these situations frequently try to uphold their routines or to bring patients to comply to their routines. However, the authors fear that this strategy will never work and that instead, doctors should learn to give up their routines.

The authors do not refer to any classical cultural theories. Instead, the “interactional ‘trouble’” (Roberts et al., 2004: 161) according to them will be caused by a lack of language competence from the side of learner-speakers of English. The authors plead for physicians to de-ethnocentrize their views and their work. According to the authors, physician’s patient-centered approach will also require him or her to consider aspects of patients’ diversity: “Since the theme of this paper is that patient-centered ideology and methods need to be tuned to diversity, our data examples have been selected to stress some of the contrastive patterns, which we have observed [...] (Roberts et al., 2004: 161).

For Roberts et al., the notion of diversity – as a recent ideological concept to follow – seems to mean that cultural differences exist, but that there is no use in mentioning or identifying them. Instead, natives just have to be prepared to encounter differences when communicating with non-native speakers. Although the authors circumvent the notion of culture and although they deny the existence of cultural differences, the authors follow an approach based on the assumption of differences: Roberts et al. (2004: 161) refer to Goffman’s notion of interaction order which is not shared among interactants from different cultures. Instead, in some situations that are routines in one culture, there are no alternative routines in other cultures at all, so there is no pre-defined order that is valid for all interactants. As a consequence, interactants should accept the lack of orderliness in intercultural situations, and in other words: intercultural situation will lack of some rules that are otherwise common, and these rules cannot be replaced or reconstructed by interactants neither.

Culture as routines resulting from values or norms

O’Driscoll (2007) gives an example for studies that go beyond the assumption of culture-bound routines in conversation: O’Driscoll tries to trace these routines back to underlying cultural values. He assumes that norms and values will necessarily have to be culture-specific. However, beyond this, it should be possible to establish universal rules in an etic way. These rules do not say anything about a culture’s particularities, but they are designed to describe and to compare cultures (O’Driscoll, 2007: 474). However surprisingly, O’Driscoll, too, refrains from such a description. He concedes that there may be culture-specific differences in interactants’s preferences for the saving of each other’s positive or negative face. However, O’Driscoll claims that this difference found in diverse cultural settings does not rely on underlying norms or values. Instead, they are just based in different conversational routines.

The influence of culture-specific values on conversation

Besides from the recent turn to the analysis of routines, some authors also continue previous approaches from linguistic-pragmatic intercultural research. Jiang (2006) for example bases her study on Blum-Kulka et al.’s (1989) models from cross-cultural pragmatics for the cross-cultural comparison of the realization of speech acts. Like Blum-Kulka et al., Jiang assumes that speech acts like requests and refusals are universal, they are based upon universal knowledge. There are culture-specific values like for example concerns of face. Facework however will be performed according to universal forms of expression like for example indirectness. As an innovation, Jiang applies Blum-Kulka et al.’s theory to the analysis of press conferences. However, while Jiang speaks of “routine press conferences” (Jiang, 2006: 237), she may neglect the notion that even press conferences themselves should be considered as culture-specific forms of institutionalized communication. From this point of view, even the implementation of press conferences in different cultural settings may vary.

While Jiang (2006) does not define culture and its influences on conversation any further, this is done by Yang (2007). He analyses the nonverbal modes of expressing interpersonal affiliation used in Mandarin.

To this aim, Yang declares Chinese culture as collectivist, and he assumes that this will lead to a high importance of expressions of interpersonal affiliation in conversation. Yang then tries to identify forms of expression, always assuming that they will be culture-specific.

Culture-specific values are put into words

Wierzbicka (1994, 1998, 2006) assumes that any culture will have its highly specific values. However, these values are directly expressed in linguistic utterances. They can be distilled from what people say by reducing their speech to Wierzbicka's *natural semantic metalanguage*. This highly simplified language consists of approximately 60 core terms providing for the opportunity to express any given cultural value. While Wierzbicka in her notion of values builds upon Hall (Hall, 1976), in their recent article Goddard and Wierzbicka (2004) point out that their cultural scripts approach actually can be seen as a culturally sensitized step ahead of the universalist approaches in pragmatics like those of Grice as well as Brown and Levinson.

A similar approach is supported by Spencer-Oatey's concept of rapport management (Spencer-Oatey, 2000): Cultures will differ to the degree of their support of universal values by preferring some and neglecting others. For example, this can be observed at the management of face. From this perspective, cultural values can be seen at the surface of speaking. This concept is renewed and still purported for example by Garcia (2009).

Culture as knowledge in conversation

Only few recent contributions continue the notion of culture as knowledge in conversation. Fetzer (2007) makes use of this approach to trace the relationship between macro- and micro-contexts to conversation at the example of denials. Normally, denials are seen as face-threatening acts that, according to pragmatist theories are dealt with in a culture-universal way (Grice, 1975, Brown and Levinson, 1978). According to Fetzer, Habermas, too, claims that even the consideration of variables from a wider social context will bring the same results across cultures. Fetzer however argues from the perspective of essentialist clear-cut cultures that there will be culture-specific knowledge about the contexts of situations. This macro-level specific knowledge may modify the culture-universal micro-context.

Constructivist concepts of culture in conversation

Although constructivist approaches to culture originally had been developed to remedy deficits found in prior, primordialist concepts, their appearance in recent publications seems to be less prominent. And even in constructivist approaches, tendencies towards a re-primordialization can be found. Charlebois (2006) for example challenges the constructivist-intraculturalist concept of *communities of practice* (Corder and Meyerhoff, 2007). Although the concept is a recent development, it builds upon a long tradition of research constituting constructivist approaches to culture. According to Charlebois, communities of practice are groups of immediate interaction. Because of their immediacy they produce common rules and identities. Culture from this perspective is seen as a specific form of knowledge that is constructed by the interactants. However, at the example of Japanese college students in the US, Charlebois shows that the perception of communities of practice may be culture-specific in itself. According to him, Japanese and US students differed in the way they attribute obligations of attendance and involvement to communities of practice. Charlebois elaborates this observation by means of conversation analysis.

What are the reasons for this turn in conversational research, and what should be done?

The review above has revealed two tendencies in recent conversation analytic research on intercultural communication: First, cultural characteristics are frequently subsumed under the notion of conversational routines. These routines are mere communicative conventions and they do not necessarily need to be connected to culture. Secondly, the notion of culture as being constructed in interaction is rarely pursued any further. Instead, constructivist approaches are proven to have culture-essentialist roots. In all, while

earlier approaches had put a lot of effort into coherent integrations of culture into linguistic analysis, challenges on this behalf recently seem to be rather avoided.

One reason for this turn in linguistic research may be found in parallel, but earlier developments in cultural anthropology. Here, Abu-Lughod (1991) summarizes the discipline's concerns on the fact that the use of the term culture, be it in its primordialist or in its constructivist use, will always encourage its users to think in terms of social separations that may not be that clear-cut in real life. Instead of promoting social exclusion and separation in this way, the notion of culture should thus better be avoided, by researchers as well as by people in their everyday lives. This view has been supported by Stolcke (1995). A few years later again, authors like Brumann (1999) argued for the advantages of the concept of culture and for a rehabilitation of the concept. Cultural analysis thus does not only allow for a detailed description of human interaction, but it is also a concept used by people themselves.

The review on conversation analyst works on intercultural communication in this paper may show that a rehabilitation and a re-conceptualization of culture as it has been done by cultural anthropologists has not been carried out in this field on a large scale, yet. At this point, it may be asked, if a re-habilitation of culture can enrich current linguistic research, too, and if so, if this can be done by looking at how cultural anthropologists did it. In fact, researchers from the field of gender studies had been the first to address the dilemma of a discipline producing its own problems of research. Judith Butler (1990, 1993) had pointed at gender studies' predominant assumption that social constructions of gender will supersede people's natural sex in such a way that they will no longer be able to immediately perceive their sex. Butler inverts this concept and claims that the idea of the existence of a natural sex is part of the social construction of gender. Keeping this perspective in mind, gender researchers are able to analyse themselves constructing the categorization of sex and gender. Doing so, they are able to overcome the former criticism of producing and reinforcing separation. If we transfer this concept to intercultural research, it may produce insights into the construction of cultural categories by academia and by society.

Butler describes the process of construction of patterns like sex and gender by means of discourse theory based on Foucault (1984 [1969]). Here, Butler modifies Foucault's approach speaking of materializations to describe the process of social knowledge that people start taking for granted because it is permanently repeated. Since people permanently participate in social discourse they have to take this discourse as their reality. According to Derrida (1967) people will not be able to understand each other in communication but by repeating (re-iterating) and citing parts from prior discourse. Butler and Derrida term this process of re-iteration as performance. Performativity on the other hand describes a subject's ability to transcend the strict common ground of materializations to a small degree while still being understood by others.

Translating these insights to intercultural research may point at individuals' constructions of culture and culture's influences. We may then assume that individuals in academia and in society will have their subjective notions of culture and its influences as well as on how to best deal with these influences. Also, we may assume that people will act according to these insights in intercultural contexts.

Tracing subjective constructions of culture in conversation

Intercultural research from this perspective will be challenged to identify and to describe these subjective notions of culture. In cultural anthropology Baumann (1996) reports on his participant observation in a multicultural neighbourhood of London. Here, Baumann showed how people legitimize their decisions on the basis of interactants' ethnic affiliations. Research from conversation analysis here can provide insights that are even more precise. Day (1994, 2006) for example identifies ethnification processes by analysing spoken conversation.

To identify interactants' subjective constructions of culture, a model of interpretation will be required that does not a priori define or specify culture or cultural influences on interaction. In other words, this analysis will require models that at first hand even deny or ignore direct influences of culture on

interaction. For conversation analysis, such an approach can be found in the field of ethnomethodology (Garfinkel, 1967). Besides of the better known strand of ethnomethodology's sequential analysis, Sacks (1974: 218) had introduced the concept of *Membership Categorization Analysis (MCA)* that later had also been used for the analysis of culture (Moermann, 1988, Hester and Eglin, 1997, Jalbert, 1999, Lepper, 2000). MCA tries to delineate interactants' construction of meaning and understanding within a given situation. Accordingly, interactants will put people and objects relevant to a situation into categories (membership categorization). Devices, here termed as membership categorization devices, are constructed as superordinate categories that subsume a number of relevant categories. Sacks adds that people or objects within a given category may be expected to carry out *category-bound activities* (Sacks, 1974: 221). These activities are taken as characteristic to members of a given category, and these activities thus will no longer be questioned. Jayyusi (1984) as well as Stokoe and Smithson (2002) later have used the concept of category-bound activities for the analysis of socially relevant categories like deviant behaviour (Jayyusi) or gender (Stokoe). Sacks himself had declared his model on membership categorization as "inference-rich" (Sacks, 1992: 174) and he encouraged future authors to expand and elaborate the concept. On this basis, Stokoe and Smithson (2006: 101) had introduced the concept of *category-bound performances*. Doing this, the authors integrate aspects of Butler's thoughts on the performativity of action into ethno-methodological research. Materializations from discourse will help interactants to put individuals and objects into categories. In other words: membership categorization will not take place without interactants' consideration of their contextual knowledge. Vice versa, situational membership categorization may help interactants to assign individuals or objects to materializations from discourse. Recently, Bergmann (2010) had elaborated on MCA's potential for the discovery of ethnic categorizations in discourse. Here, Bergmann concedes that the ethnomethodological approach will not allow but an indirect approach to the description of culture. Instead of identifying cultural influences on conversation, ethno-methodologists will only be able to describe how people talk about culture (Bergmann, 2010: 256). Despite of this potential for research, Bergmann claims that analyses of cultural categorizations on a large scale are still missing (Bergmann, 2010: 156). However, Bergmann does not link MCA to discourse analysis and its potential for a description of the social construction of the notion of culture.

Applied to intercultural research, we may expect that people will assign individuals to categories according to their ethnic or cultural affiliation. Detailed conversation analyses here may help to precisely describe the construction of categories, and the construction of category-bound performances in particular. Busch (2010) in these veins has shown that very often, interactants simply are lacking of adequate words and vocabulary to specify culture and its influences on interaction. Helping themselves, they then tend to import words from neighbouring semantic fields using them as metaphors to frame their own situation. In Busch's (2010) example from a sales conversation at a bazaar, interactions categorize and treat each others as fraudsters and dishonest persons on the basis of their ethnic affiliations. Here, category-bound performances for the management of situations that are felt as intercultural are constructed in situ and on the basis of people's participation in social discourse.

Conversational routines and performances of culturalization

A conversation analyst view on interaction combined with Butler's assumptions on the performativity of subjects' participation in social discourse may help to trace aspects of culturalization in interaction. Looking at how individuals deal with culture, how they define culture and its influences on their interaction as well as how they deal with these influences may help to avoid one of the central and early criticisms from cultural anthropology: Now, researchers do no longer bring along their concept of culture that makes them see the everyday world form a separationist perspective. Instead, interactants' actual separationist thoughts and practises may be revealed.

If we describe performances of culturalization, we can provide deeper insights into individuals' management of conversational routines. From this perspective, conversational routines may determine individuals' standardized way of interacting with each other. Rehbein (2006: 60) argues, that that interactants will question their routines in intercultural contact as soon as misunderstandings will occur.

Interactants then will try to adapt their interpretation of a given situation by considering what Rehbein terms as a “cultural apparatus” (Rehbein, 2006). In other words: Culture will not come into play until interactants perceive miscommunication. The notion of performances of culturalization instead assumes that interactants will permanently consider their individual interpretations of culture and its influences. Correspondingly, individuals may even have developed conversational routines for the management of intercultural contexts (cf. "foreigner talk", Hinnenkamp, 1987).

Intercultural competence may be supported if people manage to overcome their conversational routines and if they refrain from sticking to new ones in intercultural contact. Ehlich and ten Thije (2010: 266) had argued for a hermeneutics of everyday life (“Alltagshermeneutik”). Their plea can be supported and even extended: Individual should thus be encouraged to learn to reflect on their subjective constructions of culture. They should be made aware of the form and the degree to which their interpretations of culture will influence and control their action in everyday life. Derrida’s definition of understanding here will provide limitations for the changeability of performative actions in the context of culturalizations: Once aware about their considerations of culture people will not be able to completely change their communicative behaviour even if they wanted to. Instead, individuals will need to be encouraged to assess to what degree they may change their behaviour in situations under analysis without being sanctioned by their co-participants in interaction as well as in social discourse on culture. As a result, individuals will neither be required nor able to overcome the performative character of their action. However, they may react to subjective interpretations of culture in a mindful way.

Conclusion

This paper has traced the withdrawal of culture from conversational research. After an extensive consideration of culture in studies from the 1980s, authors in the 1990s and after 2000 have more and more refrained from precise identifications of culture’s influences on conversation. One reason for this cautiousness may be found in contemporary developments in cultural anthropology. Here, authors in the 1990s had discouraged from using culture as an object of analysis since its mere use would promote social separation. Later, a performative turn had encouraged cultural anthropologists to shift their perspective to individuals’ uses and interpretations of culture and its influences. This paper has suggested to adopt these lines of thought in conversational research as well. A model for the description of performances of culturalization has been developed combining research methods from ethnomethodology’s membership categorization analysis and theoretical assumptions from Butler’s notion of performance. As a result, the role of conversational routines in relation to potential interferences of culture may be described more precisely. Furthermore, individuals’ potential scope of action may be assessed and trained to help them managing intercultural situations in competent ways.

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