

Hermeneutic and ethnomethodological formulations of conversational and textual talk

A. W. McHOUL

This paper attempts to render explicit, and then present a critique of, certain affinities between hermeneutic and ethnomethodological work on conversation/discourse that are tentatively raised in Misgeld's (1977) discussion of Habermas and Gadamer. I begin by formulating the ways in which this possible parallel could be construed both (a) by overlaying a reading of Sacks's and Garfinkel's work onto Misgeld's consideration of Habermas and Gadamer and (b) by taking up certain hints that Misgeld makes directly about the relation of ethnomethodology and conversational analysis to the hermeneutic project. This is the first section of the paper. It ends by posing certain gaps or omissions concerning the questions of (a) the concept of 'rule' and (b) universals versus 'open-texture' in textual and/or conversational discourse. In the second section the collective work of Garfinkel and Sacks (1970) is inspected for a balanced account of the situation-specific/situation-free characteristic(s) of talk and this is offered as a counterposition to Misgeld's synthesis of Habermas and Gadamer, although it has several affinities with it. In the third section an empirical analysis is presented by way of displaying the 'open-texture'/universals problem with respect to nonconversational (textual, monologic) discourse.

Formulation

Summarily, Misgeld offers an account of the differences between Habermas's and Gadamer's theoretical reflections on discourse/conversation that revolves around the question of a 'universal pragmatics' (Habermas) as against a theory of the open-texture of talk. While Habermas holds that the theorist can reconstruct a (possibly) ideal version of communicative competence, realized as an ideal speech situation, which is then held to exist independently of any actual occasions of naturally occurring talk but *to* which conversational interactants must *orient* during

the course of such occasions, Gadamer prefers to consider conversations as highly occasioned performances that occur despite, rather than because of, what interactants might deliberately *do*:

A fundamental conversation is never one that we want to conduct. Rather, it is generally more correct that we ... become involved in it. The way in which one word follows another, ... may well be conducted in some way, but the people conversing are far less the leaders of it than the led. No one knows what will 'come out' in a conversation. Understanding or its failure is like a process which happens to us. (Gadamer 1975: 345; Misgeld 1977: 326)

So, while Habermas prefers to include a notion of deliberation, this concept is markedly absent in Gadamer. Nevertheless, the conception of conversation/discourse entertained by both theorists requires an occult mechanism, where by 'occult' I intend 'beyond or outside of human construction': for Habermas this is an ideal-type formalization constructed in retrospect by the theorist but observably *absent* from actual occasions; for Gadamer the occult mechanism is that of randomness, of a highly occasion-specific negotiation between (or rather, despite the endeavors of) interlocutors on the basis of 'what happened so far' almost without reference to 'what *is* to happen'. In this last sense, the question of deliberation or its absence becomes irrelevant; for both Gadamer and Habermas are prepared to remove from consideration the question of what interactants might actually *do* on some occasion.

Now certain popular conceptions of ethnomethodology/conversational analysis (e.g., Mehan and Wood 1975; Coser 1976) have argued that a similar sort of contrast to the above can be drawn between the work of Sacks, on the one hand, and Garfinkel, on the other. It is often said that the work of Sacks and his colleagues turns on the question of the search for universal rules of conversational interaction (*pace* Habermas) while Garfinkel's approach remains an occasion-specific one. Certainly, where Misgeld talks of Habermas as one who considers speakers to 'make reference to' or 'orient to' norms of discourse or sets of rules (Misgeld 1977: 325–326), we are very definitely reminded of Sacks's concern to view conversational rules — the rules for turn-taking being a paradigmatic case in point — as ones that are not necessarily 'observable features' but that are 'observably oriented to' (Sacks, n.d., chapter 1: 4ff.). I.e., it is not empirically the case that, in any given transcript, we can 'see' speakers strictly observing, for instance, the 'one talks at a time' rule. Many cases of overlapped turns are visible. However, Sacks et al.'s (1974) analysis attempts to display that the production of features like 'gap' and 'overlap' is generated by an *orientation* to a 'one at a time' rule. I.e., the ways gaps

and overlaps are done, the precise and orderly coproduction of the conversational 'slots' in which they occur, appear to be in accord with a general reference to the reconstructed turn-taking rules. In this respect, conversational analysis has definite affinities with Habermas — one symptom of this affinity being (in contrast with Gadamer) a preference on the part of both for going so far as to talk about 'rules'. This affinity is not directly spoken in Misgeld's text (indeed, Misgeld appears to consider Sacks's work as part of the 'phenomenological' analysis of conversation [1977: 343, fn.9]) but at the level of the comparison that Misgeld gears into between Habermas and Gadamer — and at this level only — conversational analysis may be drawn into the range of candidates for comparison. Below, I shall try to show that there are fundamental ways in which the comparison (either of Sacks and Habermas or of ethnomethodology and hermeneutics generally) does not hold; this will turn on the question of formulations of the concept of 'rule' different from that of Misgeld/Gadamer, where it is said that: 'Focusing on rules implies too much emphasis on the competency of interlocutors of which they can be assured, *before* they surrender themselves to the flow of arguments and interpretive suggestions' (Misgeld 1977: 328; italics added). The key problem here will be whether or not a rule 'naturally' carries with it an *exclusive* sense of 'before'.

By contrast with the approach that specifies occasion-independent rules, Misgeld argues that Gadamer's conception of conversation and that of Garfinkel share a parallel affinity. He (Misgeld) argues that, for Gadamer, 'co-conversants do not know in advance what the conversation in the end will come to' (Misgeld 1977: 326–327) and in the corresponding footnote, he adds: 'This is a feature of conversations as well as of other interpretive and sense-making practices [which] H. Garfinkel (1967[a]) has made thematic as the temporal order of these practices. He calls it "retrospective-prospective" sense making' (Misgeld 1977: 343). Now, when we are deliberately thinking of the contrast with occasion-independent approaches, the affinity holds good. Garfinkel has continued in his work to stress the occasionedness of conversational and other practices and has directly eschewed 'formalistic' approaches that take interactive occasions 'out of the hands of' the interactants producing them. Indeed, his primary notion of 'reflexivity' requires that what any occasion turns out to be depends on what its participants coconstruct it *as* and *vice versa*. But, by having taken things this far, the affinity begins to end. Sense-making, for Garfinkel, is retrospective *and* prospective; while for Gadamer: 'conversants do not know in advance'. I.e., for Garfinkel, there is a reflexive relation between 'what participants do' and 'what occasion this is' while, for Gadamer, the interactive process lies absolutely out of the hands of

those who are, in Garfinkel's terms, its constructors. In no sense could Gadamer's thesis that 'Understanding [...] is like a process that happens to us' be directly transferred to the case with Garfinkel. The notion of 'reflexivity' (and its major realizations, such as the documentary method of interpretation) is a primary blockage to any such candidate affinity and, when this comparison is made and fails, the occult mechanism in Gadamer's version of conversational interaction is manifest. Likewise, where Gadamer eschews the concept of rule, Garfinkel remains prepared to entertain it or its variants, with the proviso that we do not consider 'rules' as being formal, absolutely occasion-independent, or 'prior to' any actual interactive situation that might occur.

Also: while there is a certain stylistic affinity between Habermas's and Sacks's versions of communicative competence in terms of 'universal' or 'occasion-free' rules, Sacks (informed by Garfinkel's work) continually stresses the importance of the *use* of rules in localities. Indeed, rules such as the turn-taking mechanism (Sacks et al. 1974) are not products of theorizing or of reflection in absentia from actual occasions, but are produced from considerations of manifold empirical cases. The position can be taken even further when we consider that the turn-mechanism is characterized by Sacks et al. (1974: 725) as a '*local management system*, and that it is an *interactionally managed system*'. I.e., the turn-taking rules provide for possibilities in any given conversation in terms of what will happen at the *very next* — on just *this* occasion — turn at talk; and what selections from the mechanism are made by any speaker(s) will depend exclusively on previous turns (especially the immediately previous turn) and on projected outcomes for subsequent turns (especially the immediately subsequent turn). I.e., the *way* the mechanism operates — and this is its primary usefulness for a sociology of conversations — is occasion-dependent, and highly so. Considered *as* a mechanism, it merely states the conditions and limits of possible modes of exchanging turns at talk; and it is quite obvious that such a mechanism exists, insofar as turns cannot be exchanged in just *any* fashion. Considered as a means of orienting turns in their conversational course on some *particular* occasion, the mechanism provides a knowable and known facilitator of the collective construction of conversational occasions. Therefore, we come to see that no contradiction is involved in the statement that conversational rules are both context-free *and* context-dependent. Contradiction only arises (in, say, the Gadamer/Habermas debate) where 'rules' are construed as those sorts of formal recipes that have existence *absolutely* independently of occasions of language use — for example, where the model is transformational generative grammars.

Upon consideration, then, the Habermas/Sacks and the Gadamer/Garfinkel affinities do not come off as discrete analogies. Rather: on the one hand, Habermas and Gadamer both prefer to theorize occult mechanisms for conversation/discourse that are rendered problematic when the reflexive relation of interactants, occasions, and rules is overlaid on them; on the other hand, this very reflexive relation of rules and occasions displays a greater affinity between Garfinkel and Sacks than the implicit analogies we began with allowed for.

However, if we return now to the question of 'open-texture' versus universal rules of discourse generally, it can be discerned from Misgeld's paper that there is a further problem in the Habermas/Gadamer debate that the above initial formulation might cast some light on. The problem is this: while Habermas holds that conversations may *observably* turn out to be 'loose' with respect to the ideal situations that act as models for them and that, by contrast, 'dialogue-free languages have complete order' (Habermas 1973: 260; Misgeld 1977: 328), Gadamer prefers to see both dialogic and dialogue-free language situations as open-textured. In this sense, he comes very close to much recent ethnomethodology, especially to textual ethnomethodology (McHoul 1978a, b, c, forthcoming). The classic contrast that is in the offing here is the distinction between conversational and textual discourse. Misgeld's paper does not fully answer this problem, but simply puts forward Gadamer's version of the interaction involved in the hermeneutic relation between readers and the texts acting as their 'interlocutors'. In this version, the theory of 'open-texture' is saved by arguing that readers act on the instructions of texts as to what to find in them; interpretation proceeds by a method analogous to the Gadamer version of conversation; the outcome is not known in advance, only previous 'bits' of text can inform us as to how to read those on the horizon.

Given this, we ought now to be able to reintroduce the key ethnomethodological concept of reflexivity in order to decide in what ways *textual* discourse has an 'open-texture' and whether or not Gadamer's conception of 'guidance by textual instruction' is overly one-sided in not allowing for equal participation rights on the part of readers. Before we can come to this, a further matter arises for our treatment.

In Habermas's view, we are invited to accept a typology of roughly the following sort: that some languages (uses of language), typically dialogues, have a relatively loose or open structure while others, typically texts, are the products of 'complete order' and display that order. Whereas Gadamer has cast suspicion on this typology by suggesting that textual talk may partake of features 'normally' associated with dialogic discourse, ethnomethodological and conversational analytic studies have

begun to cast the entire typology into doubt. A summary of the genesis of this critique might look thus:

(1) Garfinkel and Sacks's (1970) collective work on the interdependence of occasioned and context-free features of rules can presumably have application in respect to textual as well as dialogic talk.

(2) The above receives some initial justification insofar as the above-mentioned paper is equally content to talk of textual communications and of conversational talk (e.g., the discussion of *both* Richards's and Rose's glosses [Garfinkel and Sacks 1970: 343–366]).

(3) Sacks et al. (1974) discovered that local/interactive management and the *preallocation* of interactional processes — such as turns at talk — does not constitute a bipartition into types but a linear array along which various kinds of talk can occur. Thus situations of talk may well be locally- *or* pre-managed (natural conversation and debate being polar extremes) *or* a combination of the two; *or* located on a continuum between the two extremes (McHoul 1978d).

I have already attempted to break down part of this distinction by showing aspects of premanagement in certain 'formal' occasions of dialogic talk (McHoul 1978d); what remains to be done here, therefore, is a two-fold task comprising the second and third parts of this paper:

Theoretical: a fuller explication of points (1) and (2) above on the synthesis of the occasion-dependent and -independent character of rules and conclusions about language-use to be drawn from Garfinkel and Sacks's collective work.

Empirical: in what sense can so-called nondialogic (e.g., textual) uses of language be seen to have an open, negotiated, or interactively managed texture? Here an actual case of reading a newspaper article will be scrutinized.

I take as my warrant for the performance of the above two tasks the fact that Misgeld openly admits that the problems raised in his paper cannot be solved by theoretical fiat, but by concrete studies. 'These studies', he says: '... are not within the range of competence of the philosopher, unless he is willing to be informed by studies of conversations [and presumably other forms of talk] as daily courses of action. Sociological studies are now underway and may permit a new formulation of this problem' (Misgeld 1977: 336–337). Again, in the corresponding footnote, Misgeld adds: 'I am thinking of "conversational analysis" (the analysis of naturally occurring conversations) which developed out of ethnomethodological sociology. H. Sacks in particular was responsible for this development. For references cf. Garfinkel/Sacks (1970)' (Misgeld 1977: 343).

Counterposition

Theoretical problems of rule use

Let us begin with Misgeld's (1977: 330) overgeneralization to the effect that 'For Wittgenstein ... the normal case of following a rule is a decisive one'. We can crudely summarize a reading of the later Wittgenstein's work as the attempt to consider language as a question of interrelated *practices* or language-games and thereby to cut short the tendency in philosophy and elsewhere to construe language as a definite and definable calculus, analytically separable from the occasions of its use. This tendency was called by Wittgenstein himself (1958: 18) 'the contemptuous attitude towards the particular case' or 'the craving for generality'. In order to find answers to puzzles regarding language — or to show theoretically generated puzzles to be nonproblems — it is necessary, according to this view, to locate *particular* cases of sites on which language is used. A nice summary of this position is to be found in Wittgenstein's remark to Malcolm (1958: 93): 'An expression only has meaning in the stream of life.'

The practical ramifications of this position for any linguistic sociology are that, no matter how much we hope to isolate 'universal practices' or once-and-for-all 'rules of use' pertaining to interactions employing or constructed in a linguistic medium (and constructed *as*, in large part, uses of language), the actual practices and 'rules' we observe or discover will turn out to be inseparable from particular occasions of their use. I should like to take up here, insofar as it has wide ramifications concerning the problems posed in the section above, this question of 'inseparability'. From immediately above: a rule, as it were, *is* only a rule insofar as there is a locatable occasion of a performance in accord with it and, for analytic purposes, insofar as there are materials that preserve that occasion for its later examination as rule-like. Yet is there not a discrepancy in saying, as Wittgenstein may tempt us to do, '*a rule*' and '*a (single) performance*', in that the very notion of 'rule' seems to require something we may gloss as 'reproducibility'? Can we (a social collectivity, a culture?) follow a rule only once during our existence? Wittgenstein most certainly indicated what the *site* of linguistic-sociological investigations should be (i.e., determinable occasions of use), but the problem of occasionedness versus reproducibility still requires detailed examination. Here it is necessary to look at ethnomethodology's formulation of the problem, a formulation that attempts, as we have seen, *not* to construct the question in terms of '*either occasionedness or reproducibility*'. In accord with much previous ethnomethodological work, we shall find it valuable to hold here that

apparently 'fixed' or 'independent' features can be construed as products of the continual interactive work accomplishing them; these features then reflexively providing the grounds for the very scenes in which they appear as 'expectable' features.

Using a reading of specifically Sacks's¹ work on rules and the question of 'rule', it can be said that while a *description* of some particular occasion's — or occasion's participants' — procedures for the production of that occasion — or occasion's 'objects' — will be a context-sensitive description and will thereby include the situationally specific work performed by the participants (as *and* in that occasion), we must nevertheless be able to say that this occasioned methodicalness constitutes a unique and particular *use* of some more generally available device(s) or technique(s). Taking the 'principle' of reflexivity as an instance (Garfinkel 1967a: 7–9): we should have to say that an utterance or series of them may be heard and produced as performing some action (e.g., 'questioning') only in the ways that the utterance(s) comprise(s) an integral part of some occasion where it was questioning that was observably and concertedly done for and by its constructors. However, we might equally say that this is the case only insofar as there *are* ways in which such utterances *routinely* turn out to be thus. One (inconclusive) piece of evidence we have for reproducibility *across* occasions and cohorts of 'the same' activity is that activities get named or reported in the same way across occasions and cohorts. That such 'naming practices' (investigable in themselves) may be equally sensitive to the exigencies of particular occasions has been noticed by Sharrock (1974: 49): '... the name is not to be revised in the light of events but is, rather, to be invoked in the description of whatever events occur'. Thereby, we *might* make an arbitrary division into context-free *devices* or techniques and context-specific uses of them as 'the events'. The point is this: on whichever side we situate ourselves as analysts with respect to this division (*pace* Habermas/Gadamer), its arbitrariness will ensure that we are always saying something relevant to 'the other side'. The difference (for theory) is but one of emphasis and is therefore a phenomenon entirely of the analyst and, more crudely, of practical matters such as the stage a particular investigation has reached.

There nevertheless appears to be a discernible (but analyst-specific) paradox: On the one hand, we want to be able to say something about the methodicalness of ordinary activities that are performed (and consist in nothing other than their being performed) on *more than a single* occasion and are collected (by community members) under the same rubrics ('questioning', 'irony', 'reaching verdicts', etc.) *on* more than a single occasion of their being competently done. On the other hand, the only entry site for the analyst (*pace* Wittgenstein) must be some specific

occasion(s). To construe this problem as that routinely encountered in (social) science as 'generalizing from necessarily limited evidence'² is to radically mistake the nature of the enterprise; for the question of reproducibility in *this* case is one that has been shown by previous ethnomethodological investigations to be a question not so much of analytic nicety as of practical significance for those who would engage in (and construct) everyday occasions and their 'objects'. I will therefore turn to Garfinkel's (1967b) and more particularly Garfinkel and Sacks's (1970) work on reproducibility as a feature of the work of *particular* occasions.

Despite characterizations to the contrary (e.g., Coser 1976),³ ethnomethodology has but rarely concerned itself with the *unreproducible* features of specific occasions. Taking an early study like Garfinkel's (1967a: 116–185) 'Passing and the managed achievement of sex status in an "intersexed" person', we can note that the ethnographic details furnished there, while in the form of a 'case study', attempt to discover what is routinely done on more than a single occasion of 'passing as a woman'. Collecting a policy for such research, Garfinkel (1967b) and Garfinkel and Sacks (1970) have recommended that (the seemingly researcherly) matters of the uniformity, typicality, and reproducibility (and other terms that would specify the standardization of times, places, and cohorts) of various mundane machineries (e.g., for questioning, opening conversations, or arriving at verdicts) are matters that are recognized as present by *members* producing such objects as 'questions', 'openings', and 'verdicts' on particular occasions of so doing. In short: reproducibility is itself an occasioned accomplishment. Thus while (following Wittgenstein) our site of investigation must be the *in situ* methodicalness of any practice, much of the previously available analytic work that has been done on such practices recommends that *but one detail* of *in situ* methodical practices is that they are recognized, attended to, and produced as practices that rely on reproducible or context-independent methods. Garfinkel (1967b: 186) says that reproducibility, as one detail among many of members' practices, is, like other details: 'acquired and assured only through particular, located organizations of artful practices'. In the later paper, Garfinkel and Sacks (1970: 346) collect reproducibility along with 'uniformity ... repetitiveness, standardization, typicality, and so on' as the INVARIANCE of everyday machineries across occasions. To this they add INDEPENDENCE, or the nonrestrictiveness of methods to particular cohorts (1970: 346). While methodical structures are invariant and independent (= reproducible), they nevertheless remain *occasioned*. They can only emerge as integral details of *constructed in situ* occasions and as practical machineries for the here and now construction of such occasions. While we may wish to say that these machineries remain

'knowable' as features for the constructability of 'the same' situation (past or future), we cannot point to any evidence for their existence as, say, mental structures, outside some occasion of their use. I.e., it appears that the reproducibility of a practice (its rule-likeness) is only available where that reproducible practice is being performed, and where that reproducibility is a visible feature of its being *occasioned* performed. While it may be obvious to say that *occasionedness* is 'every particular cohort's practical, situated accomplishment' (Garfinkel and Sacks 1970: 346), we must *also* hold this to be the case, as do Garfinkel and Sacks, for invariance and independence (= reproducibility). In terms of policy, then, our descriptions of members' machineries for the production of social 'objects' must be both context-sensitive and context-free, where 'context' specifies particular spatial and temporal locations and a particular production/reception cohort.

As far as analytic strategies are concerned, the phenomenon of reproducibility leaves us with at least two choices:

(A) we can examine a number of candidate instances of some 'object's' production (say, conversational openings) relatively isolated from the rest of the work that accompanies it as a 'whole' occasion or event and thereby 'sacrifice' some of that event's occasionedness (cf. Schegloff 1967, 1968). In examining, say, conversational openings, we might 'miss', for instance, a suicide threat or a means of making reference to persons as they were performed in the conversations following our topicalized object 'openings'. In such an investigative instance, we will be concerned to find what is uniformly done across many fragments of 'whole' events as 'the same thing'.

(B) we can investigate some 'entire' event (a conversation, a reading) where *but one of* the features of that event we shall be concerned to describe will be its cohort's attention to the uniformity, typicality, standardization, etc., of the ways they have for methodically producing the several 'objects' produced in and as that event.

Strategy (A) is closer to the methodology of Sacks's conversational analysis and (B) is closer to Garfinkel's procedures; but there is no longer any implication of the 'nature' of interaction in this distinction. It remains a researcherly question. (A) will give us finer details of some everyday machinery's *rule-likeness*, while (B) will give us a larger range of possible machineries *for* investigation. It is quite obvious, then, that (B) can usefully discover phenomena for later analysis by strategy (A) and is therefore highly appropriate for *beginning* analysis of some topic. Despite the apparent separateness of (A) and (B), if 'Every social action attests to the possibility of equivalent social actions' (Mehan and Wood 1975: 187), then we are emphatically *not* dealing with two distinct forms of repro-

ducibility; as it were, one attended by members on particular occasions and one reconstructed by analysts on reviewing instances from more than a single occasion. For, (1) while the machineries (methods) for the production of 'equivalent' social actions are 'known' *in practice*, they remain for their users unremarkable, taken-for-granted, seen-and-attended-to, used-and-available, but unnoticed. And (2) without these characteristics of reproducibility (invariance + independence) and unremarkableness as endogenous features of interactive occasions, each such occasion would become a cultural shock. Therefore, (3) there is a requirement of (cultural) sociology that it explicate these unremark-upon-able machineries by way of a description of 'how culture is done' and a further requirement that, as cultural sociology, its *eventual* research program will be specifically concerned to say something about the reproducibility of these machineries, whether by strategy (A) or strategy (B) above. In the first instance (i.e., with respect to our final section's project) we require research strategies for locating cultural machineries for the performances of reading texts. I.e., we need to find what sorts of phenomena are on the agenda as at least candidates for reproducible machineries. *A first attempt at reading-analysis would, therefore, preferably be done via strategy (B), insofar as a proliferation of candidates might thereby be isolated.* Consequent attempts could then use this information in the performance of strategy (A), having discovered *what* to investigate there and at least rudimentary findings about those objects' methodicalness.

Machineries of cultural production

An entire industry of professional talk has centred on the question of literature as 'cultural production' (McHoul 1978a: 155–237). From this talk has arisen the central question of the sociology of literature, culture, and the arts: what is the relation of a work to its 'producing' cultural milieu, *Zeitgeist*, epoch, and so on (Schegloff 1972: 432–433) through a variety of terms conceived as part/whole relations? While answers to this question have been invariably proffered in terms of relations between a text's content or form and the substantive (contentual or formal) 'facts' of the time of the text's production, very little attention has been paid to participants' constructions and reconstructions of a 'culture' as a series of preferred practical methods for undertaking quite ordinary tasks as and in that culture. Elsewhere (McHoul 1978a, b, c, forthcoming), I have assumed that a sociology of literature (textual ethnomethodology) could be established on this alternative basis, whereby the particular ordinary activities in question would be members' dealings with (i.e., readings of)

texts. Instead, then, of searching for parallels, homologies, and other relations *between* discrete items or systems, such a sociology of literature treats the practices of using (reading) texts as constitutive aspects of participants' methodical ways of 'doing culture'.

Our position with regard to sociology of literature's central question would then be: there is no relation of discrete entities, but (somewhat cryptically) the culture *is* the doing of it in variously many ways (cultural praxis), including the use of texts, as matters of ongoing and interactively concerted *work*; this work requiring manifold machineries for its performance. Further: details of the machineries employed by readers in using texts and producing readings, so far as can be told from crude experimental investigations (McHoul 1978a: 239–326), display resemblances to the machineries used for doing other sorts of activities-as-and-in-a-culture — especially those used in the production of natural conversations (Hatch 1978). The warrant for such a sociology of literature may be found in the work of the later Wittgenstein and of many ethnmethodologists, but it may likewise be found in Marx's *8th Thesis on Feuerbach*: 'Social life is essentially *practical*. All mysteries which mislead theory to mysticism find their rational solution in human practice and in the comprehension of this practice' (Marx 1968: 30).

Given that strategy (*B*) was chosen above as our preferred present policy, our projected inquiry would have to examine *in situ* occasions of some readings as and in the full detail of their livedness; as and in actual, as-far-as-possible-naturally-occurring, practically oriented, ordinary, ongoing activities with specific temporal and spatial locations and specific cohorts. By 'cohort' is intended: a specific production/reception population of two, a reader and a text, where reader and text (in contrast to Gadamer's thesis) concertedly produce a reading and where (in accordance with Gadamer) a reader receives a text. However, by virtue of the desirability of future research being performed via strategy (*A*), such a sociology would also attempt to isolate, in those aspects of its description dealing with the reproducible orderliness of those activities, at least *candidate* details of them (rules) that are recognized and attended to *by* the occasions' cohorts as independent of and invariant to those particular cohorts and those particular spatial and temporal locations. The ultimate objects of research are therefore (1) methods that 'hold good' for 'us' as competent readers of texts across particular occasions of 'our' reading; and possibly (2) methods that hold good across particular occasions of readerly and other (nonreaderly) activities such as conversing, queuing, making purchases, and so on, including any social activity where 'sense' is made of some talk or action.⁴ These 'ultimate' objects are well beyond the scope of the present paper, though they indicate the 'natural' extension of

this research program — what Lakatos (1974) calls a program's 'positive heuristic'. The more pressing problem is the question of how the guidelines for a reflexive analysis (where by 'reflexive' I intend to invoke a constructive version of Turner's [1971] notion of the ineluctable use made by investigators of their knowledge of and participation in social practice [McHoul 1978a: 327–377]) may be put into service as a 'first attempt' using strategy (B).

As a consequence, there is a research interest in finding, producing, or otherwise collecting 'data' or materials that preserve the livedness of occasions of reading. This interest requires that we collect analysables so that prospective candidates for readers' methodical ways are answerable to some actual materials at hand. Further, such materials should, where possible, be 'strong' materials. I.e., they should preserve as fully as possible the *in situ* livedness of the occasions that they can only be said to 're-present'. Insofar as they can never *be* those occasions but constitute, for instance, reports, representations, reconstructions, reproductions, mock-ups, recollections, or reexhibitions of them, I shall call them 'ethnographies' or natural histories. While there may be good grounds for doubting the usefulness of the strong/weak distinction for ethnographic materials,⁵ we may still say that even the 'strongest' of them — such as multicamera, split-screen, audiovisual recordings and their 'close' transcriptions — are still not characterizable as *the* occasions but rather as traces of the occasions. In another sense, they are 'merely' part of the very orders of event they report.

Nevertheless, we have an interest in collecting ethnographies of reading situations. This is for the reason that the rapidity with which ordinary understanding/interpretive work takes place prevents its on-the-spot analysis;⁶ and such work as it is performed on and with texts and *as* readings is apparently no exception to this. Obviously, no audiovisual recording and transcription is going to provide such an analyzable ethnography; so where are we to find our 'reminders'?

One possibility that could be considered is to comb the literature for readers' reports on their readings. Some literary critics engage from time to time, for their own practical and pedagogic purposes, in the production of such reports.⁷ Also, certain works *prescribing* reading methods (Richards 1959; Adler and van Doren 1972) include useful ethnographic materials. However, previous investigations (McHoul 1978a: 327–377) have led to the point where a reflexive sociology of the analyst's own reading(s) appears to have much to recommend it.⁸ For this reason, I have undertaken a first attempt at producing an ethnography (natural history) relevant to this program. Somewhat unsuccessfully, I attempted there *not* to do analysis of the *reading* itself, as it occurred, while acknowledging that

any reader must perform analyses of the *text* or the textual utterances in question. Below, I present first the ethnography and subsequently the text used in its production. Thereafter an attempted analysis of the former using strategy (B) above is undertaken.

Analysis

Ethnography

(1) Today is the 18th of October, 1977 and I am looking through a stack of
 (2) old newspapers that have been lying around my office. I decide upon
 (3) writing this ethnography for a reading of any article I should come across.
 (4) I pick up a paper dated August 23rd 1976. It is the *Canberra Times* for
 (5) that date. After a brief inspection of the cover I turn inside, skip page 2
 (6) and turn to page 3. I notice a small article and decide to use it. I only
 (7) notice its smallness in terms of column length; I don't begin to read it. I
 (8) have decided that a short article might be best for this first attempt. The
 (9) difficult thing is that I have to make a conscious effort not to do some kind
 (10) of analysis, but just to report on the reading of it. There is a sort of effort
 (11) of will involved.

(12) The article has the headline 'Key areas "safe"'. I am attracted by it. The
 (13) title seems to be about nothing at all I could recognize as 'news' or
 (14) remember as a current issue. I ask myself: What the hell's that about? It
 (15) appears like a puzzle to me and I want to find out what's going on with it.

(16) I begin to look into the body of the article, the text of the item and the
 (17) first sentence. I read it: 'The Prime Minister, Mr Fraser, said on Friday
 (18) that ...'.

(19) I check the date of the paper and find that it was Monday's edition. I
 (20) take the 'Friday' to be the previous Friday, that is the 20th.

(21) The hardest thing is not to look down, to read on at normal speed,
 (22) which would ruin my note-taking. I am aware of the tremendous speed at
 (23) which reading, in all its complexity, is done. At the same time, I don't want
 (24) to tease out things from the reading that I'm *not* doing in it (as it). There's
 (25) a balance between doing this too slowly and too quickly.

(26) '... key areas in the Public Service would not be affected by the
 (27) reductions in the number of public servants.' This is the end of the first
 (28) sentence and of the first paragraph.

(29) So I've found what the mysterious 'key areas' are. Or rather what the
 (30) 'areas' are: they are areas of the Public Service. But which such areas are
 (31) 'key'? I've found some of the sense in which they (whatever they are) are
 (32) 'safe', why 'safe' was in quotes in the headline. It was a statement: said to

be 'safe', not *are* (definitely) safe. I've found who made the statement. Also (33)
 where. But I've no clue yet as to the exact pertinence of his having to say (34)
 this. I want an answer to the question 'Why?' Why is this news? Why is it a (35)
 current issue? (36)

I ask myself: What reductions in the number of public servants? The (37)
 article seems to take it that I will know about them already. That 'the' (38)
 appears so sure. (Sure of itself?) I begin to think back to about the time, (39)
 but nothing occurs. So I go outside the guidelines I've set for myself for (40)
 this reading and check some other, earlier papers. Then the controversy (41)
 comes to mind, as I see that the budget had just been handed down prior (42)
 to this. There was a lot of trouble to do with the ACOA (Administrative (43)
 and Clerical Officers' Association) fearing that jobs would be lost in the (44)
 budgetary cuts to the Public Service. I remember the problem clearly and (45)
 the talk that was going on among friends in the Service. I take it that I (46)
 have found what it was that the article expected me to know. And that the (47)
 article is meant to be read as one of a series or as a running-item — that (48)
 the article is designed, up to now, for people who've done all that previous (49)
 reading, for whom the issues would be fresh. I take it to be a follow-up (50)
 report on matters of topical concern at the time, matters already known (51)
 by readers of this newspaper, or who've been otherwise informed (on the (52)
 radio, in chats, and so on). I read on: (53)

'Mr Fraser,' runs the next sentence (and I 'cheat' by looking down to (54)
 see that it's also a paragraph) 'at a briefing in Canberra, said the new staff (55)
 ceilings announced in the Budget would be achieved by normal wastage (56)
 and not by retrenchments.' (57)

I was right. But then I wonder: If the article *is* taking it for granted that (58)
 its readers are in the know about those 'reductions', why does it have to (59)
 spell out *just* what reductions these are in this, the next line? I can see (60)
 what's meant by 'safe' in the headline — or rather I've found *more* about (61)
 their safety. It's kind of a qualification. Before, it said that the areas would (62)
 not be affected. I'd taken this to mean that some ('key' — whatever this is) (63)
 areas would be exempted, while others, presumably, wouldn't. Now I find (64)
 that there will be reductions here but that the method of making them will (65)
 be by 'normal wastage'. I take 'normal wastage' to be 'safe'. So the 'safety' (66)
 has to do with *someone's* fears about losing jobs. I guess the ACOA, but (67)
 the problem of all this 'spelling out' is a worry to me. (68)

I guess that some people would, as I did initially (prior to getting myself (69)
 acquainted with the current issues), pick up the newspaper without (70)
 knowing about all this, about the budget cuts to the Public Service, about (71)
 the fears and so on. So I begin to reckon that the article is taking account (72)
 of two possible sets of readers. The word 'populations' comes to mind. (73)
 One of these is informed, in the know, and the other not so. I'm no longer (74)

(75) doing a single reading. But this is what has turned out. (Like suddenly
 (76) seeing the duck *and* the rabbit in the optical illusion). The question occurs:
 (77) would the informed readers have gone on to this second paragraph/
 (78) sentence? I acknowledge that I'm conjecturing about a reading, having
 (79) found myself to be a member of what I've come to think of as the *two*
 (80) possible groups. (I think there are probably others). I decide anyhow that
 (81) they (the informed readers) would still read this second paragraph because
 (82) of the fact that the 'safe' aspect of the headline is still not cleared up —
 (83) although parts of the first paragraph could have been read as 'all there is
 (84) to say' regarding the 'safety' aspect. Didn't I think this at the time? The
 (85) piece about 'normal wastage and not ... retrenchments' gives the key to
 (86) this; it is the additional information.

(87) I picture what is for me a typical 'informed', lower-grade public servant
 (88) (i.e., one in possession of knowledge about these issues), eager for the news
 (89) about his job. He'd know what 'the reductions' of the first paragraph
 (90) were, but I figure he'd still read on to find out just what this 'safety' aspect
 (91) was. He's found that certain jobs 'won't be affected' but the exact
 (92) management of their 'being unaffected' is still unclear. How can it be that
 (93) they're unaffected when there *are* going to be cuts? The second paragraph
 (94) looks like it solves this apparent contradiction — a contradiction that
 (95) could be read given only the headline and the first paragraph.

(96) I picture what is for me a typical 'not-in-the-know' reader, perhaps
 (97) someone from an area, unlike Canberra, where the proportion of the work
 (98) force not employed as public servants is high. I figure that he'd have to be
 (99) able to recognize 'the Budget' as a current issue. I reckon that the article is
 (100) taking the news down to a level of what readers *would* know about, given
 (101) that there are at least two groups of readers. I remember that I'm not
 (102) supposed to be doing analysis in this and so drop the thought. But
 (103) something occurs to me about the 'geography' aspect. Why Canberra?
 (104) Why not Canberra, A.C.T., so many miles from Sydney, Australia, etc? I
 (105) think of it as being more evidence for taking these things down to a
 (106) 'known' or knowable level. The *news* is not something as yet known. I
 (107) finally repress my analytic tendencies. I'm annoyed with myself for
 (108) departing from the ethnographic work.

(109) I prepare to read on, having found *what* key areas (though not yet what
 (110) 'key' is), having found who said they were safe, how this 'safety' was
 (111) meant, and so on. I remember that what had looked like a final statement
 (112) on the 'safety' aspect (paragraph one) turned out to have more to it. So I
 (113) prepare myself to have to read some further stuff on such things as 'the
 (114) sayer', 'what "key" areas are', possibly even more on the 'safety' thing, or
 (115) the still-open question of 'whose jobs?'. The next lines are:

(116) 'Public-service union officials commented after the Budget that services
 (117) to the public may be badly affected by the staff reductions.'

So I was right about the ACOA. But this sentence/paragraph only tells (118)
 me that there's *been* some previous new about this. It says: This article has (119)
 been part of a running-item. It discloses the content of some previous item (120)
 or items of news in the series. I reckon it would be no use at all to the (121)
 reader 'in the know' and that it's there to cover its own tracks, the article's (122)
 tracks. By this I mean: on the one hand it has to be *news*, but it seems to be (123)
 taking account of the fact that one group's news is another's old hat, (124)
 depending on things that have happened outside the reading-at-hand (e.g., (125)
 reading other, previous articles, chat, etc.). This paragraph is, I decide as a (126)
 member of *that* population as well, definitely designed for the uninformed. (127)
 It says nothing that further illuminates the headline unless the reader was (128)
 bothered about the pertinence of Fraser having to say this, and an (129)
 informed reader would know that anyway. I realize that what I'm saying (130)
 sounds like the 'background- versus scene-dependent' distinction of one of (131)
 my earlier papers,⁹ and that the prospect of having to do analysis on this (132)
 reading is 'coloring' that very reading. I try to stop. (133)

I think what this third paragraph is about is the addition of information (134)
 that there have been some fears on the part of someone (the union (135)
 officials) and that Fraser's statement was made in order to allay those (136)
 fears. I can see both Fraser's speech and this article as 'allaying fears' — (137)
 certainly the fears of the union officials — if they are successful — and (138)
 possibly also the fears of the public. Perhaps, I think, 'key' areas are those (139)
 that involve 'services to the public'. Of the fears: the background to these (140)
 and these fears themselves will be either known or not known by the two (141)
 populations of readers I've 'invented' in my reading. (142)

I stop reading and listen to the taped comments I've made as I was (143)
 going along. I make notes that come out of immediate reflection upon (144)
 what I've just done. I add these notes to a transcript of the tape at suitable (145)
 points. The final version is this ethnography. (146)

Text

- (1) Key areas 'safe'
- (2) The Prime Minister, Mr. Fraser, said on Friday
- (3) that key areas in the Public Service would not be
- (4) affected by the reductions in the number of public
- (5) servants.
- (6) Mr. Fraser, at a briefing in Canberra, said the new
- (7) staff ceilings announced in the Budget would be
- (8) achieved by normal wastage and not by retrenchments.
- (9) Public-service union officials commented after
- (10) the Budget that services to the public may be badly
- (11) affected by the staff reductions. (*Canberra Times* 1976: 3)

In the ensuing analysis, passages from this text are marked as, for example, '(t. 7-8)' while passages from the ethnography are marked as, for example, '(e. 34-35)'.

Constructing the news: a provisional rule for the first moment of reading

The foregoing ethnography displays a richness of studiables. In saying this, I intend to indicate the plethora of activities that can be made 'problematic' upon an inspection of the ethnography. These might be such things as [[reading a passage as allaying fears]],¹⁰ [[reading a passage as news]], [[reading a passage as one of a series]], [[reading a passage as paragraphed]], and so on. The following analysis concentrates maximally on one specific 'object' and its accomplishment. We can provisionally call this [[reading a news item as scheduled]]. 'Scheduling' is used here to gloss a process of sequential discovery that is narrated in the ethnography. That process will be seen to entail methodical ways of connecting two further accomplished 'objects': [[reading a headline as introducing an article]] and [[reading an article as being introduced by a headline]]. While my formulation of these two 'objects' tends to make them look identical — a transformational generative grammarian would say, for instance, that they are differing surface structures with identical deep structures — it will be the purpose of this analysis to show how this 'sameness' is only available once a good deal of methodical work has been performed in order to accomplish it.

I intend, then, to make a problem of readers' work of [[taking a headline to be an introduction to just *this* article]] and [[taking an article to be introduced by just *this* headline]]. By 'headline' I intend, then, 'Key areas "safe"'; by 'article', the body of the text following; and by 'item' or 'news item', the composite: 'headline + article'.

It would be a commonplace to say that the headline introduces the article. But this commonplace disguises a problem for the reader in at least this particular case. In lines 12-15 of the ethnography, he says that what he calls a 'title' does not in fact, at that point in the reading, 'do titling' of the item. It 'appears like a puzzle' to him (e. 15). He does not know 'what the hell' it's about. Via an ongoing, temporally paced, or 'scheduled' process of work he comes to find the solution to the puzzle — i.e., how it is that the title 'does titling' and how the article is 'so titled'. How the introduction performs its introductory work specific to just this article only becomes clear once the article it is 'assumed' (?) to introduce has been read. And how the article *can* be read as introduced by just this title does not become clear until the very last moment of reading. The first and the

last moments of reading, thereby, mark not only the (physical) beginning and end of the news item but also the beginning and end of a course of understanding work, each of whose stages (including the first and the last) are mutually dependent.

Considering the point at which the reader has encountered the headline only, we can say that only at some future point, *possibly* the end of the reading, by a *retrospective* sense of occurrence, can the headline and article be read as mutually coherent or as acting as sense-making devices for one another.

This may not be the case for every newspaper headline and article. The matter seems to be one of degrees of transparency and opacity. For instance, 'Fraser sees Kerr: Election date expected today' (*Canberra Times* 1977a: 1) can be seen to already comprise terms whose sense may be visible for 'informed' readers, where 'informed' includes having information on the context and pertinence of this particular prospective announcement as news; e.g., that Fraser had 'kept refusing to confirm or deny' (*Canberra Times* 1977a: 1) that there would be an early election. Yet for the headline in question here, and for others of similar degrees of opacity/transparency, such as 'Bill for one head' (*Canberra Times* 1977b: 3), there is a marked invisibility of their pertinence to *any* reader; their sense only being discoverable upon the performance of a reading of the ensuing articles. I.e., 'Fraser sees Kerr: Election date expected today', just here, on this date, would be a relatively clear matter whether or not the whole of the news item was read. Such (transparent) headlines appear as 'news in themselves' and may be followed by further 'details' or 'news in itself'. Obviously, for the reading subject in question, 'Key areas "safe"' does not have this status. (Neither would I want to suggest that this 'status' is something to do with the 'words in themselves' over and above their specific historical and geographical location. Further, the difference is obviously one of degree and not of some bipartition such as 'objective/indexical'.)

We can also say, upon inspection of the ethnography, that the headline is a [[preliminary guide]] (Hatch 1977: 6) to the article. It is 'preliminary' in that it falls sequentially prior to the article and it is a 'guide' in that it gives (or will be seen to *have* given) clues as to 'what the article is about'. But it can, and hence the cautious parentheses above, only be read as 'having *been* a preliminary guide to this *particular* article'. It *becomes* visible as a [[preliminary guide]] only after this article has been read and, further, read as the 'key' to the headline. Strangely here, 'preliminarity' is a matter of gradual and for-the-future decidability. With respect to the headline, then, our topicalized 'object' becomes its [[becoming a preliminary guide in reading]].

By contrast, 'prefaces', for example, do not typically display this

feature. They appear to be matters of greater transparency, in that they are expectably constructed in forms such as 'In the following we shall discuss a, b, and c, and what is meant by a, b, and c is ...'. Prefaces are typically specific and give useful information guiding readings of what is to follow them *from the very moment* of their being read. Thus while the 'definitions' given in prefaces may be highly problematic and require that later sense-making procedures be carried out upon them (in order to 'fill them in'), at least we can say that the reading of 'preface+text' is genuinely linear and step-wise; a gradual sense of their problematic items (where these exist) being built up *from that point*. Our headline, on the other hand, appears to have been dealt with in a specifically nonlinear, continually retrospective manner. I.e., rather than 'instantly' beginning to *use* the headline in order to understand the article, the reader here has to conduct a course of understanding *work* in order to find out later *how* the headline might be so used.

Again, we can say that the headline acts as a [[summary device]] in that, like a preface, it summarizes what is to come. If asked, *after* reading the article, what it was about, the reading subject could confidently reflect 'It was about key areas being "safe"'. But again, the headline itself, as it stands, at the point prior to the article's having been read, cannot yet tell us *how* it is acting as a [[summary device]].

The above 'discovery', in itself, might be seen as a 'test case' for our earlier remarks about occasionedness/reproducibility. For if the headline's acting as a [[summary device]] can only be found by a process of discovery work that *eventually* assures the headline's status *as* a [[summary device]], then we, as analysts, become disturbed by the (non)question: what is its status just there and then, in the first moment of reading, prior to the body of the article having been read? We feel we want to cover the possibility of its being 'senseless' by saying something like: that it is or will be a [[summary device]] can be *known* in advance and only the occasioned 'how' of the matter is, for now, missing. We want to say that the reader holds the *assumption* that it will be a [[summary device]] in some as yet unknown ways even prior to a reading of the article; that he holds this assumption at *all times* and only needs to take it 'out of wraps' to confront this particular occasion. We are drawn into thinking of a rule for headlines that states that they are 'expectably summaries' that may be transparent like prefaces or relatively more opaque (discoverable-as-summaries) like 'Key areas "safe"'. We feel almost confident in saying that we can take this much as known and used by readers even prior to some particular headline's being read. We want, in short, to underestimate the provisional rule's occasionedness. It is as though readers continually carry around with them a predictive knowledge that they *put* to use on this or that

occasion (McSweeney 1973), as the (objective) *occasion* demands. This form of (Chomskian) mentalism takes it that a rule is the kind of thing that can be held as innate knowledge, waiting in abeyance for some appropriate occasion of its usability. It is possibly in such ways that theoretical devices such as *innateness* or the unconscious get generated. On these theses, the occasion and the use of the rule appear entirely separable, in that the *objective* occurrence of the occasion (i.e., its nonparticipant-constructed occurrence) constitutes merely a 'signal' for lifting the innately or unconsciously stored rule 'off the mental shelf'. But Wittgenstein has pointed to a peculiarity of rules that countermands such an occult position: i.e., that they remain *occasioned* as well as reproducible. That is, we do not, in any acceptable use of the word, *know* the rule and its applicability outside some actual occasion of its use, while its existence *as a rule* ensures its usefulness *across* a number of particular occasions. In order to balance rules' characteristics of occasionedness and reproducibility we should need to say both (1) that a particular occurrence of a rule's use will not admit us immediately to all such occasions, and concomitantly (2) that 'knowing the rule' will not mean that we are preprepared for some particular occasion of its use, *prior to* (or 'outside') that occasion being interactively constructed here and now. We covered the first aspect in the second section above. Wittgenstein anticipated the second aspect when he gave the example of the 'rule for a series of numbers'. A teacher asks a student to continue a series of numbers by adding 2 at every point. 'Add 2' may be the (or an) expression of the rule in this case. Wittgenstein asks of the teacher: 'So when you gave the order +2 you meant that he [the student] should write 1868 after 1866, and 100036 after 100034, and so on — an infinite number of such propositions?' (Wittgenstein 1953: #186). Wittgenstein talks of this as being misled by the grammar of 'to know' and 'to mean':

For you don't want to say that you thought of the step from 1000 to 1002 at that time — and even if you did think of this step, still you did not think of other ones. When you said 'I already knew at the time ...' that meant something like: 'If I had then been asked what number should have been written after 1000, I should have replied "1002"'. And that I don't doubt. (Wittgenstein 1953: #187)

Normative conceptions of (linguistic) action such as the theory of ideal speech situations, Chomskian linguistics, symbolic interactionism, Lévi-Straussian structural analysis, Barthesian semiology, etc. demand that rules have an essential quality — almost in the Platonic sense — that guarantees their being continuously known and available in advance and/or (mentally) stored. For ethnomethodology, however, rules, while

reproducible, are specifically occasioned. I.e., they *exist* in no essential mode but rather in a praxiological mode, insofar as they are regularly seen to constitute *part of* the detailed work of *accomplishing* an occasion rather than being lifted from some sphere considered as independent of such occasions (and where such occasions are, concomitantly, considered as 'objectively' constituted). The distinction between cognitive and interactive uses becomes irrelevant. Yet, in one sense, the normative paradigm is correct: rules occur as 'appropriate' to situations. In another it is incorrect, for situations are not merely given but are reflexively constituted by such things as 'following rules'. In the normative paradigm 'appropriateness' is a matter of 'matching'; for ethnomethodology the 'matched' features are reflexively constituted. Therefore, it becomes possible to say that 'appropriateness' is no longer a matter of matching independent equipments and occasions but a matter of continual reflexive interplay between mutually constitutive occasions and equipments.

Care should then be exercised in considering rules as questions of 'knowledge', where this requires some kind of mental baggage over and above 'the ability to go on'. Wittgenstein asks: '... what does this knowledge [the application of the rule of a series of numbers] consist in? Let me ask: *When* do you know that application? Always? day and night? or only when you are actually thinking of the rule?' (Wittgenstein 1953: #149). Again: 'If there has to be anything "behind the utterance of the formula" it is *particular circumstances*, which justify me in saying I can go on — when the formula occurs to me' (Wittgenstein 1953: #154). The reproducibility of rules across occasions ought not, then, to blind us to their occasionedness (this being specifically an analytic rather than a practical problem).

Returning to the case at hand, we should ask rather: what does the term we feel we want to use, 'knowing in advance' (that the headline will act as a [[summary device]]), actually gloss? It is a question of: when constructing a particular occasion of which one detail is the following of a rule, that rule can be just *then* used or followed — it is a 'being able to go on' (Wittgenstein 1953: #208) from just *here*. The occasion and the rule are inextricably bound and the occasion is the only site on which the rule can, for analyst or participant, be located. It is only when we come to do X that the rule for X occurs. For a 'being able to go on' is a 'being able to go on sustaining just *this* as "what we are doing"'. We can only talk of 'known methods of acting' or 'known rules' where the relevant 'knowing' is intrinsically analyzable by, displayable by, and available to participants as scenic features of some occasion. The preservation of preferred methods across innumerable situations gives the 'surface appearance' of reproducibility and *just one* way of accounting for that reproducibility is to

analytically reconstruct it as underpinned by some 'deep' storehouse of rules that preserves them between occasions. Along with the later Wittgenstein, in addressing the questions of 'knowledge' and 'rule', we must realize that investigations that ask, for instance, 'Where is the rule when it is not being used?' will get us nowhere in terms of a study of forms of social interaction that participants to interaction observably (for themselves and for analysts alike) orient to as rule-like. One way in which this orienting is done is, as we have seen, *via* 'naming practices' that demand that bits of social interaction get identically reported as 'questions', 'turns', 'headlines', 'readings', and the rest. Hence, it is, in congruence with the later Wittgenstein, necessary to see knowledge itself as an occasioned social accomplishment, a matter of (crudely) 'doing knowing' or 'displaying knowledge', as opposed to construing it as the possession of a 'mental store' (common *or* private). 'Knowledge' has acted as a useful gloss for participants and some research alike, but for us it is the work it glosses that must now become a topic. That the analysis of practical (linguistic) action does not have its 'natural' terminus at the point where some item(s) of 'knowledge' (from an infinity of things that could be so titled) is discovered and 'fixed' (ontologized, reified) has particular significance for our present problem concerning headlines as [[summary devices]].

Given that the case in hand involves a *particular occasion* of the problem of some headline's elliptical character, we can say that the reader here may be attentive to a possible rule; i.e., *that* headlines characteristically act as [[summary devices]]. But of more immediate analytic concern is the methodical accomplishment of his 'displaying the rule' in and as conducting a particular discovery procedure by which this headline turns out to *be* readable as a [[summary device]] for just this as-yet-unread article. What we are striving against by formulating the occurrence in this fashion is the idea that 'the possible movements of a machine are already there in it in some mysterious way' (Wittgenstein 1953: #194) and what we are striving *for* is to replace this idea by considerations of some occasion(s) of the 'machine's' working.

Constructing the news: scheduling textual questions and answers as a course of understanding work

Let us return to the specifics of this constructive, display, discovery, or understanding work for the case in hand. Hatch (1977: 6) has suggested a useful formulation here, viz., that summary devices are not peculiar to the beginnings of accounts, but can reoccur. From the ethnography, we can

see that the reader takes as [[partial summary devices]] various items that collect details that have gone before, and do so in an economical format (similar to pronominalization) so as to render complete rephrasings unnecessary. Continually the subject reads such things as 'Mr. Fraser' (t. 6) as collecting 'The Prime Minister Mr. Fraser' (t. 2) or: 'the staff reductions' (t. 11) as collecting 'the reductions in the number of public servants' (t. 4-5) and/or 'the new staff ceilings announced in the budget' (t. 6-7). Further, these [[partial summaries]] are not only read but used in the production of the ethnography. However, a [[summary device]] that is in addition to act as a [[preliminary guide]] is different from these, at least for this reader, in that it is a matter of discovery (etc.) work for him to find out how it collects the *whole* of the article. This is the nature of the 'puzzle' (e. 15).

In being a collection for the whole article, it is taken by the reader to contain an embedded instruction (*pace* Gadamer) that can be glossed as: read the article for its being about the things collected in this headline and read the things collected in the headline as discoverable (for their sense) upon a reading of the article. Thus, at least as an analytic reconstruction, we can say: once the subject has exhausted or been able to 'figure' what each item in the headline is 'about', he can find he has understood the whole article and, concomitantly (via one and the same course of work), once he has understood the whole article he can find what each item in the headline is 'about'.¹¹ It is important, then, that having read the headline ongoingly and reflexively acts as a device for his being able to find that the article makes sense, and reading the article, equally ongoingly and reflexively, acts in the same way for his understanding of the headline.

The headline, therefore, acts literally like a puzzle, the solution to which displays to the reader that he has made a competent understanding of the news item. So to the embedded instruction is added a 'discovery mechanism'; to wit: once the sense of the title is found, so is the sense of the article it titles, and vice versa. Thereby, the reader finds not only the sense of the news item but also *that* he has understood. The discovery mechanism can therefore be taken as socially congruous with techniques such as pronominalization/proverbialization (Sacks 1967b: Nov. 9 and Nov. 14) whereby understandings may be 'monitored'.

The process of discovery is carried out in a step-wise fashion that is (where the sense of the headline is concerned) retrospective and (where the sense of the article is concerned) prospective or anticipatory. The reader partially expresses this in terms of a series of questions and answers (to the puzzle). I say 'partially' because, in another sense, the question-answer (Q-A) format is a useful analytic device only (though see e. 35). Answers-

to-questions may be found prior to the questions they turn out to have answered:

A1: The 'areas' are areas of the public service. (e. 29–30)

The headline is thus read as 'having begged the question':

Q1: What areas?

Having found that one part of the puzzle and its solution can be done in terms of, or terms *analogous* to, question–answer (Q–A) parts, the reader often continues to perform (some version of) the procedure. What he finds is that the second headline item ('areas') has received some clarification, while the first ('Key') remains part of the puzzle-to-be-solved, despite its reappearance (or perhaps because of the absence of its explication) in the first paragraph at t. 3. The question following is therefore scheduled for answering:

Q2: What is 'key' (or what are, specifically, 'key' areas)?

(e. 31)

While the first paragraph does not alter the problematic status of 'key', a third answer-to-a-question is found:

A3: The areas are safe in that they will not be affected by reductions in the number of public servants.

And this answer's concomitant Q-part is thereby read-as-posed by the headline:

Q3: In what ways are the areas (Q₁) 'safe'?

Here there are several related matters. First:

A4: 'Safe' is in quotes because it is a statement.

Q4: Why is 'safe' in quotes?

A₄ leads to two further answers-to-questions and their questions:

A₅: The Prime Minister, Mr. Fraser, made the statement.

Q₅: Who made the statement?

And:

A₆: The statement was made at a briefing in Canberra.

Q₆: Where was the statement made?

Notice here that for A₁/Q₁, Q₂, and A₃/Q₃, and A₄/Q₄, the Q-parts are read as questions posed by the headline whose answers will (a) clarify the sense of the headline and, (b) in being clarifiers of the headline, display to the subject that his understanding of the article is 'on course'. On the other hand, A₅/Q₅ and A₆/Q₆ are generated, not directly by the headline's problematicity, but by extension of the A₄/Q₄ pair. Thus while Q₁ through Q₄ are directly text-originated, Q₅ and Q₆ are, in some measure, naturally originated. That is, if quotations display *that* a statement was made (and they do this at least on *this* occasion once the initial paragraph has been read), a 'natural' requisite of the news item reporting this statement

appears to be that it will give: by whom and where. Also, it has been read as supplying 'when' via the same format:

A₇: The statement was made on Friday.

Q₇: When was the statement made?

(e. 17-20)

Here (in Q₅/A₅-Q₇/A₇) the answers are furnished by the article, but the questions stem from what any competent reader might require of news reports (which report, e.g., a 'statement') rather than from what any competent reader might require of just *this* headline. A further question of the first (context-independent?) type concerns the pertinence of the sayer saying *this* there and then. It concerns the newsworthiness of the event (the saying) being recounted:

Q₈: Why was it said? (e. 34-36)

A further question is then read as the question posed by A₃:

Q₉: What reductions (Q₃/A₃) in the number of public servants?

(e. 37)

Now this is dependent upon both 'natural-origination' and an anticipation of further clarification of the 'safe' aspect of the headline (text-origination). I.e., finding out 'what reductions' will entail finding more about aspects of the reductions' 'safety'. Thus the reader is left with three unsolved parts of the puzzle: Q₂, Q₈, and Q₉. That is, these questions are schedules for answering.

Lines 40-53 of the ethnography consist of a guess at an answer for Q₈. Interestingly, the reader assumes that the answer-to-the-question would already be known by at least one population of readers; i.e., the question and its answer would be naturally-originated for this 'ideal-typical' reading cohort. The same is the case for Q₉, for which e. 41-45 is also a guess-answer. Thus guess-answers A₈ and A₉ (which turn out to be the answers later made apparent by the text) are given the provisional status of answers-for-a-cohort, for 'those not informed'. That is, 'those informed' would take A₈ and A₉ not as answers to problems of textual transparency but as matters-of-course.

A₈: Why it was said has to do with its being said in the context of a controversy about possible loss of jobs in the public service arising out of budgetary cuts.

A₉: Reductions in the number of public servants announced in the budget.

So while *this* investigation cannot produce materials that would suggest that the item is designed for particular recipients (re: the production processes leading up to the publication of the item, such as editing, cutting, etc.), we can say that this reader *takes* the article as 'recipient designed' (Garfinkel 1967a; Garfinkel and Sacks 1970); where that

'design' is a requirement of his understanding of the item and where: 'By "recipient design" we refer to a multitude of respects in which the talk by a party ... is constructed or designed in ways which display an orientation and sensitivity to the particular other(s) who are the co-participants' (Sacks et al. 1974: 727). That is, the reader is attendant to the article as designed both for those preinformed on such matters as 'the staff reductions', 'the pertinence of Fraser's saying this', and so on *and* (once the relevant answers are later 'spelled out' in the article) for those who are not so informed. Readers, as it were, appear to impute recipient design to (at least some, including this) text(s). In each case, however, the reader takes it that talk worthy of the title 'news' should be 'additional' to that information already held by the respective reception cohorts (considered as ideal types). Now, the present reader, in that he can identify himself with both groups, acknowledges that the information-held-in-common by these two ideal cohorts is not identical. In fact his criteria for the construction of such 'populations' consist of matters relating to the topic 'information held'. He has first considered that — via the text's insertion of 'the' in 'the reductions ...' at t. 4 — the article was designed for the preinformed population alone. I.e., it seemed to be dealing with information already held by that population and to constitute an 'addition' to that information; the use of 'the' (where it is otherwise optional) being a means by which speakers can show that they expect the object under consideration (here, 'reductions') to be known in common by themselves and their interlocutors. Upon the article then 'spelling out' just what reductions these are or — depending on the ideal cohort — turn out to be, he realizes that the article is 'covering its tracks' as a contender for the title 'newsworthy' by catering now to the 'uninformed' population also. On the one hand, it risks being 'old-hat' (e. 124) and impinging on the competence of the 'informed' group. On the other, it risks being overelliptical by not presenting sufficient background for the 'uninformed' group to make a competent understanding of it. We have already said that *any* reader should be able to monitor her/his ongoing understanding of the article by ongoingly finding it to be a sense-making device for the headline and vice versa. Now if the choice is between 'old-hat' and ellipsis, this is the same thing as saying that the sense-making device will be either overeffective (giving more information than is necessary) or undereffective (giving less information than is necessary). This is expressed in the ethnography as 'taking the news down to a level of what readers *would* know about' (e. 100) but not beyond. Going beyond this 'cut-off' point for newsworthiness — e.g., by including 'Canberra, A.C.T., so many miles from Sydney, Australia' (e. 104) — is placing the status of this as 'news' in jeopardy. The problem of having two ideal reading populations, and thereby two

respective cut-off points, requires careful sequencing of the item's utterances,¹² and equally careful readerly attention to that sequencing. The reader decides that the article faces this problem by having informed-cohort-specific 'news' sequentially *prior* to uninformed-cohort-specific 'news'. Thereby, any actual reading cohort from the first population *can* literally 'stop reading' once it finds that the headline has been fully explicated; that is, once the sense-making device is beginning to become observably overeffective (e. 76–78) or where the article is beginning to state 'the obvious'. Overall, the reader is attentive to this formatting as an economy. The 'informed' group could discontinue their readings once the 'explication' of the headline was beginning to look overeffective, say, at the end of the first paragraph — which assumes, for the stage we have reached currently, that they have prior information regarding the unsolved question of what 'key' areas are (Q₂). Thereby, the only uneconomical activity over the course of such a reading would be their minimal effort spent *finding* the 'extra' utterances to actually *be* uneconomical. The 'uninformed' group, according to this reader, would necessarily perform a 'complete' reading.

The reader in our present investigation, however, decides that even the 'informed' group would be able to gain information over and above that which they held prior to starting reading (and that this too would facilitate their solution to the headline's puzzle) from reading beyond t. 5. This concerns the 'safety' aspect of Q₃. Here the reader finds that his previously-arrived-at version of A₃ was 'incomplete' (e. 60–66) and that this would be the case *whichever* group or population he was a member of. A revised version of A₃ is arrived at, whereby he finds retrospectively what 'safe' 'really' is:

A₃': The areas (Q₁/A₁) are safe in that, though there will *be* reductions, these will be made by normal wastage and not by retrenchments.

From this, there is a similarly revised answer to Q₈:

A₈: It was said in the context of someone's fearing that there would be job losses owing to the budget cuts.

Hence a new question can be posed and an answer is first guessed at and later found to be presented in the article:

Q₁₀: Who fears losses of jobs? (e. 67)

A₁₀: I guess the ACOA (e. 67)

A₁₀': Public service union officials (e. 118)

Interestingly, now that both A₃ and A₈ have undergone revisions (becoming A₃' and A₈'), the subject takes it that 'answers' are not necessarily 'final answers', i.e., they are subject to revision later in the article. Thereby, he selects A₅ as a possible answer-to-be-revised (e. 113–114); acknowledges that Q₂ is still scheduled for answering (e. 114);

takes already-revised answers (A_3 and A_8) as contenders for even further revision (e. 111–112 and 113–115); and admits that A_{10} had only been a guess and is still open to the presentation of an answer (e. 115). It is a matter of some difficulty, however, to gloss this work as ‘doing mistrusting’.¹³

In fact, the next thing the subject finds is a presented answer to Q_{10} that he reads as substantially close to his own prior (less general) guess. Via reading the last paragraph as ‘allaying fears’ (e. 137), he is then able to produce a guess-answer to the still-scheduled Q_2 . The answer to Q_{10} has been ‘the ACOA/Public Service union officials’ but this was only with respect to the topic ‘fears of losing jobs’. Now the reader, possibly upon realizing that ‘key’ is not going to be finally and presentedly cleared up, has to inspect the text before him for a possible solution. Thus ‘fears’ is treated as extendable from one domain (fears of losing jobs) to another (fears of services being badly affected *owing* to loss of jobs) in order to furnish a ‘fit’ between ‘key’ in the headline and *some* utterance in the article — a nice display of the subject taking the article and headline as constituting a ‘discovery mechanism’ *whatever* might or might not be ‘presented’ in either. Thereby A_2 is arrived at, if only in guess form:

A_2 : Key areas are those that involve services directly affecting the public.

We can see that, upon arriving at the end of the article, the reader is able to take the headline as being this particular article’s [[summary device]], insofar as all its items have been rendered transparent in their various fashions (by presentation, by guess, by revision, and so on). Likewise, the reader can find that he has undertaken the appropriate discovery mechanism entailed in the elliptical headline’s embedded instruction and, thereby, performed a competent reading of the article. A further offshoot of this is that the ‘object’ [[the end of the article]] should have been marked in this way (suggesting its problematicity) throughout the above analysis, for [[the end of the article]] is not merely constituted by the finish of print at some physical location or by arrival at a new headline, photograph, cartoon, etc. It is constituted by an interaction between these ‘objective facts’ and the completion of the discovery mechanism. I.e., the [[end]] *may* occur both once a physical boundary is reached and once the headline’s puzzle has been cleared up. ‘May’ in that there need not be coincidence here.

We have also seen that answers to questions-read-as-posed-by-the-headline were able to entail further questions that required guessed-at and/or presented answers before the headline could be made sense of. The Q–A pairs, that is, did not give direct access to the headline’s sense, but could work through subordinate Q–A pairs that *they* generated in order to furnish that sense. Further, there were also naturally-originated questions

that had only tacit relations with some actual headline-problem and that required answers on the basis of information expectably found in news items.

Conclusion

The findings of the analysis have concerned, then, the making or production of a social object glossable as 'a competent understanding'. The means of producing this object was seen to be a series of tasks that we can call 'understanding work' and that, in contrast with Gadamer's thesis, could not be merely something 'which happens to us'. That work was seen to be performed simultaneously *on* (or *with*) the text and *as* (or *in*) the reading. Further, the understanding work is seen as a detail *of* the reading. Understanding work itself is, therefore, seeable as involving a form of reflexivity, by virtue of its being performed *on* details of the *reading* (as opposed to the text) and *as* a detail of the reading. In short, understanding includes finding not only that 'utterance X is about ...' but also finding *that* 'I have understood'. Understanding work makes provision for itself as one detail among many details within its scope. In a certain sense, then, there is a self-containedness about the reading-situation we have investigated involving a mechanism for the reader's reflexive monitoring of his own understanding.¹⁴ A bold guess might suggest that this is an integral feature of the reading of elliptical prefaces or presummaries.

By 'self-containedness', I do not intend that this occasion of reading is unrelated to other occasions of reading or to other 'social experience'. First, the item was read as part of an ongoing 'story' or running-news-item. It was inextricably englobed in a larger account. Here we can take as an example the reading of 'the' in 'the reductions in the number of public servants' (t. 4-5), where 'the' was taken as ensuring, (a) for those who are following the *running*-item, *that* this particular addition to it *is* 'the next in the series'. 'The,' we should like to say, 'refers back' to or 'assumes' information already held by readers of the running-item-so-far. Thereby, substantive knowledge (information) is just one class of accomplished objects handlable by routine methods of, in this case, the performance of readings. I.e., we are interested in substantive knowledge as a topic only insofar as we can detect routine methods for its accomplishment or use, where one of those uses is the reading of 'the' in this text. Further, the reading of 'the' acknowledges, for readers of the running-item, *how* the particular article in question is part of (or the latest addition to) that running-item. I.e., it collects 'those reductions already reported at some previous time, as news-at-that-time'. And (b) it ensures, for those who are *not* following the

running-item (for those for whom 'this is the first I've heard of it'), that, but not *how*, this particular part-of-the-running-item *is* part of *some* (unknown) running-item.

As the reading subject says, at a point where analysis and ethnography overlap (e. 130–133), the readings of 'the' is background-dependent for that reader's imputed 'informed group', while it is scene-dependent for his 'uninformed group'. It is background-dependent in that, for the 'informed' ideal cohort, it either (a) requires no in-the-text preperinentization or (b) is taken to be preperinentized by earlier utterances of the *running-item-so-far*. It is scene-dependent in that, for the 'uninformed' ideal cohort, it is read as requiring some postperinentization, which comes at t. 6–8. Note: it is only upon discovering that some postperinentization *has* been done that the reader is confident in postulating two ideal cohorts. (See McHoul [1978a: 228–291 and 309–312] on pertinentizing.)

By reading 'the', for example, in this way, the reader takes his ability to construct a methodical reading as evidence for the text's methodical construction. Further, he takes this construction to be open to plain view and not 'just for me'. While the *in situ* production of the *text* cannot be an investigable object for the present research, the discovery of how and that 'hearers' of texts, in producing a *reading*, are attendant to assumed or imputed aspects of the methodical work of producing *texts* is highly significant, in that it creates a distinct overlap between reading and dialogic exchanges in terms of participants' methods. The discovery of a 'family resemblance' between textual and conversational discourse is significant in that it renders a conclusion much closer to Gadamer's hermeneutics than to Habermas's universal pragmatics. At the same time, it has become equally obvious, over the course of this investigation, that the thesis of readerly passivity implicit in the view that 'understanding is like a process which happens to us' is a radical (and possibly ironic) underestimation of the mutual and reflexive constitution of reading situations by texts *and* their readers.¹⁵ Last, the so-called 'imponderability thesis', which holds that readers cannot 'know in advance' how a stretch of discourse will 'turn out', appears quite problematic in the light of our investigation. The reading we have looked at was primarily constructed in terms of conceptions of 'what is to come'. It was *prospective* as well as *retrospective*.

Misgeld has begged the fundamental question of whether we speak through language or language through us. As strict alternatives, the question is badly put; for it masks the vast amount of work yet to be done on the *relation of* linguistic resources and their *use*, on the one hand, and language production practices and conversational/textual *objects*, on the other.

Notes

1. Work on rules and the phenomenon of 'rule' can be found throughout the oeuvre of the late Harvey Sacks (1963, 1966, 1967a, b, 1968, 1969, 1970, 1971, 1972a, b, c, d, 1973, 1974, 1975, n.d.).
2. For the distinction between rules and generalizations, see Shwayder (1965: 246–247).
3. Coser (1976: 35) prefers to take 'situation-specific' studies as those that describe 'mental acts of consciousness' and context-free studies as those that describe 'communicative exchanges between actors'. It is fairly evident, however, that very little ethnomethodology is now being done in relation to the former and that the situation-specific/situation-free 'controversy' is actually a question of different strategies for examining the latter. This obfuscation out of the way, we can now hear Coser's range of choices for ethnomethodology: '... either [ethnomethodology] attend[s] to the situation-specific, context-related aspects of social actions, and therefore [is] limited to descriptive accounts, or [it] will attend to social forms that abstract from specific contents and allow generalizations that go beyond the particularities of situated meanings' (Coser 1976: 35). The work following this footnote attempts to address what appears here as a 'choice' and argues that studies of (situated) social actions have already shown that the occasionedness and the reproducibility of social actors' methods are not, for those actors, mutually exclusive kinds of criteria but are, rather, mutually dependent.
4. The first research object is coterminous with the discovery of methods (or 'rules') for undertaking 'the same' language-game on different occasions within a form of life. The second research object is coterminous with the possibility of discovering family resemblances between language-games comprising a form of life (culture?).
5. As opposed to the notion that materials be inspected for their relative strength or weakness vis-à-vis the events they report, I prefer the position suggested by D. J. Hatch (personal communication, 41678) that they be treated as *reminders*. The term nicely acknowledges and dissolves the troubles that can arise when too much is made of the possible confusion of ethnography and event. For one paper that does treat the notion of ethnographic 'adequacy', see McDermott et al. (1979).
6. Here I am addressing the question of 'analysis' as a researcherly matter, i.e., analysis that would include descriptions of *participants'* on-the-spot analyses of utterances as a maximal part of its work.
7. Persons interested in a couple of ethnographies that occur naturally in the work of literary critics and that attempt to narrate the processes by which such people perform their readings might refer to Lodge (1966: 80–81) or to Wellek (1960–: 419). These particular 'reflections' coincide with much hermeneutic work and with Garfinkel's (1967a: 76ff. and 40) work on 'the documentary method of interpretation'.
8. I cannot go into details of the deliberations leading to this conclusion. Relevant materials may be found in Turner (1971) and Mehan and Wood (1975: 229–238).
9. See McHoul (1978a: 309–316).
10. I set off each of these activities or accomplishable objects with double square brackets, '[[]]', to indicate that they are glosses for immense amounts of detailed work, where the explication of that work as methodical ways of producing the objects so set off would be the potential topics of many reading-analyses. In short, the device exists as a mnemonic against the tendency to hypostatize social activities. The brackets are glossable as: this 'thing' is through-and-through a doable matter.
11. I use 'about' here in the old Lancashire sense, i.e., as in 'What are you about?' (What are you doing?). I.e., what the headline is 'about' — what it 'means' — is a question concerning what is done with it, what use is made of it.

12. Another way that news items can handle the matter is by making a topic of the fact of possible differential information across hearing/viewing cohorts as in the following opening to a TV news item: 'Many people turned out today in Canberra to see Prince Charles who, *as you're probably well aware by now*, is visiting Australia.' (Australian Broadcasting Commission, 1977)
13. To what extent the existence of two answers to Q₃ (and possibly also to Q₈) could constitute 'misinformation', given that A₃ and A₃' fall on opposite sides of the reader's constructed cut-off point for the 'informed' cohort's competent understanding, is a separate matter. Note here, for example, Watson's (1973) careful handling of his description of public address announcements at a racetrack after [[the death]] of a racing driver. He does not deal with the announcement (which does not specifically mention 'a death') in terms of 'misinformation' — implying a critical, moral judgment — but in terms of a 'missing topic'. The present account of 'two answers' can be treated in a similar way — i.e., upon the production of A₃', the reader discovers that his reading up to that point has 'really' been performed with some topic 'missing' (safe=normal wastage, not 'no wastage'). Compare this, then, with Watson's later discovering that Jo Siffert's death was what, in fact, happened.

Nevertheless, that a news item should be so constructed as to have it appear that a politically liberal outcome (no retrenchments in 'key' areas) was intended only *later* to divulge a politically less liberal result (normal wastage [in other areas?]) is certainly suspicious, especially since at least one ideal-cohort *might* have already found the headline's solution and ceased reading. This would be, for those so interested, a possible entry point for a critical sociology. Here attention might be turned to the following: the only resolution of the problem would require a fuller delineation of what 'key' areas are. As things stand, the indexicality of this pronouncement is such that *any* action re retrenchments/cutbacks could be seen subsequently to have 'really' been in accord with it 'all along'. Fraser, that is, still has a completely free hand despite these attempts to 'cool out' the controversy.
14. Many will still argue that this analysis concentrates too fully on the 'normal' case of understanding, where 'normal' is considered appropriate in contrast to 'what is strange, novel or not understood' (Misgeld 1977: 330). However, I would contend that a concentration on a situation where the reader *initially* did not know 'what the hell' (e. 14) some stretch of talk was about loosens the complete effectiveness of this objection. Of course, what it shows is that there are routine methods for handling/encountering 'what is strange, novel ...', etc. Attention should be drawn at this point to Schegloff et al.'s (1977) work on routine methods for the accomplishment of repairing items of conversation considered by interactants as worthy of such correctional work, where one category of such items includes those that might be located in the hermeneutic tradition as 'misunderstandings'.
15. A conclusion for ethnomethodology per se might be that Mehan and Wood's (1975: 179–204) rescuing of ethnomethodology for the hermeneutic tradition is quite ill-considered. One concomitant of such a projected synthesis is, of course, that Mehan and Wood must take on Gadamer's 'ontologizing shift' over and against 'constitutive ethnomethodology'. While their deliberations over such a move involve a discussion of 'the reflexivity of reflexivity' problem, it is now plain that this move's solution to the problem spells the end of considerations of reflexivity *simpliciter*. Ethnomethodology, in synthesis with hermeneutics, rejoins normative sociology.

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Alexander W. McHoul (b. 1952) is a lecturer in Sociology in the Department of Education, James Cook University of North Queensland, Australia. His principal research interests are analysis of natural conversation, analysis of routine methods of reading and textual communication, and sociology of literature and culture. His publications include 'Ethnomethodology and literature: Preliminaries to a sociology of reading' (1978), 'The organization of turns at formal talk in the classroom' (1978), *Selected References to Coenetics (The study of behavioral organization of face-to-face interaction)* — Special Issue of *Sign Language Studies* (1979; with Adam Kendon, Matthew Ciolek, and Rob Elzinga), and 'Cultural creation: Unsociological aspects of Goldman's sociology of culture' (forthcoming).