Validity in Research on Naturally Occurring Social Interaction

Peräkylä, Anssi

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Validity in Research on Naturally Occurring Social Interaction

Anssi Peräkylä

Abstract

The validity of research concerns the interpretation of observations: whether or not the inferences that the researcher makes are supported by the data, and sensible in relation to earlier research. This chapter describes processes of validation in research based on audio or video recordings of social interaction. Although it uses examples drawn from conversation analysis, it discusses validation issues relevant to many different kinds of qualitative research. Such issues include the analysis of the next speaker's interpretation of the preceding action as an instance of validation of the researcher's interpretations, deviant case analysis, specifying with reference to data the claims concerning the relevance of an institutional context of interaction, comparisons within and between institutional settings, generalizing results of case studies as possibilities of social interaction, as well as use of quantitative techniques. Some procedures of validation in conversation analysis are used in this particular approach only, while others are shared between conversation analysis and other qualitative approaches. At a more general level, the considerations of validity in all qualitative research are the same, involving meticulous testing and consideration of the truthfulness of analytic claims.

Keywords:

validity, conversation analysis, deviant cases, comparisons, generalization.

The aim of social science is to produce descriptions of a social world – not just any descriptions, but descriptions that in some controllable way correspond to the social world that is being described. Even though all descriptions are bound to a particular perspective and therefore represent the reality rather than reproduce it (Hammersley, 1992), it is possible to describe social interaction in ways that can be subjected to empirical testing. *Reliability* and *validity* are the technical terms that refer to the objectivity and credibility of research.

In research practice, enhancing objectivity is a very concrete activity. It involves, on one hand, efforts to ensure the accuracy and inclusiveness of recordings that the research is based on, and, on the other hand, efforts to test the truthfulness of the analytic claims that are being made about those recordings. The former effort has to do with reliability. Even though it is of utmost importance, it will not be discussed in this chapter (see, however, Peräkylä, 2004). The latter effort involves validity, and it will be the topic of this chapter.

The researcher's efforts to ensure validity takes different shapes according to the type of data on which the research is based. Questions that arise, for example, in research based on interview data are partially different from questions that arise in observational research. In interview research, one key question of validity is whether the views expressed by the interviewees reflect their experiences and opinions outside the interview situation, or whether they are an outcome of the interview situation itself (see Silverman, 2010: 225–229). In observational research, such questions do not arise because the researcher does not manufacture data but observes naturally occurring situations. In observational research, on the other hand, one key issue is the reconstructive nature of the field notes and descriptions based upon them: that is that the descriptions to a degree are bound to represent the researcher's (and not the participants') cultural and cognitive perspectives (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007: 203–205).

This chapter will deal with issues of validity in research based on audio or video recordings and transcripts, and, in particular, in conversation analysis (CA). I will focus this discussion on one specific type of qualitative research only, mainly because, as stated above, the questions of validity take a different form in different qualitative methods. Although the chapter focuses on a specific type of qualitative research , the basic issues raised here are relevant in the context of any qualitative method. Therefore, readers who are not primarily interested in CA are encouraged to treat this chapter as an *example* of the kinds of considerations that need to be addressed by any qualitative researcher. Even though the specific questions and answers concerning validity are different in other qualitative methods, the basic concerns are the same. At the conclusion of the chapter, I will return to some comparisons between questions of validity across different qualitative methods.

What is Validity?

The validity of research concerns the interpretation of observations: whether or not 'the researcher is calling what is measured by the right name' (Kirk and Miller, 1986: 69; see also Guba and Lincoln, 2005: 205–209; Silverman, 2010: 275–286). In discussions about validity, especially in the context of quantitative research, there is an underlying background assumption about a separation between the 'raw' observations and the issues that these observations stand for or represent. Responses to questionnaires, for example, can be more or less valid representations of underlying social phenomena, such as the respondents' attitudes or values (see Bryman, 2004: 72–74). In CA, the questions of validity are articulated in a rather different way. The core aim of conversation analytical research is to investigate talk-in-interaction, not as 'a screen on which are projected other processes', but as a phenomenon in its own right (Schegloff, 1992a: xviii). This commitment to naturalistic description of interaction gives a distinctive shape to the issues of validation in CA. These include:

- the transparency of analytic claims;
- validation through 'next turn';
- deviant case analysis;
- questions about the institutional character of interaction;
- the generalizability of conversation analytic findings;
- the use of statistical techniques.

The Transparence of Analytic Claims

In *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Wittgenstein pointed out that philosophy, rightly understood, is not a set of propositions but an activity, the clarification of non-philosophical propositions about the world. The method of this activity is complex because the 'knots' in our thinking are complex, but the results of philosophy are simple (see Kenny, 1973: 18, 101–102). A similar kind of paradox between the complexity of method and the simplicity of results is characteristic of CA, too.

The results of (good) conversation analytic research exhibit, in a positive manner, what Kirk and Miller (1986: 22) called *apparent validity*: once you have read them, you are convinced that they are transparently true. A conversational activity called 'fishing' may serve as an example. Anita Pomerantz showed in a classical paper published in 1980 how participants in a conversation can indirectly 'fish' for information from one another by telling what they themselves know. Descriptions of events displaying their producer's 'limited access' to the relevant facts may work as a device

for inviting the other party to disclose his or her authorized version of the same issues (assuming, of course, that the other party is in a position of having privileged access to the relevant facts). Such dynamics are at work in cases like the following:

(1)

```
1 B:   Hello::.

2 A:   HI::::.

3 B:   Oh:hi:: 'ow are you Agne::s,

4 A:   Fi:ne. Yer line's been busy.

5 B:   Yeuh my fu (hh)- .hh my father's wife called me

6      ..hh So when she calls me::, .hh I can always talk

7      fer a long time. Cuz she c'n afford it'n I can't.

8      hhhh heh .ehhhhhh
```

(Pomerantz, 1980: 195)

In Extract 1 above, the description based on limited access to relevant facts given by A (bolded) works as what Pomerantz called 'a fishing device', successfully eliciting B's insider's report in the next turn. By telling her observations about the line having been busy, A makes it relevant for B to disclose to whom she was talking.

The description of an activity like 'fishing' tends to 'ring a bell' as soon as anyone stops to think about it. 'Fishing' is something in which everybody has participated in different roles. But until Pomerantz's article, this activity had not been described formally. The results of Pomerantz's analysis are very simple. Her argument is transparently true, or, in Kirk and Miller's (1986) terms, it has a genuine 'apparent validity'.

But just as in Wittgenstein's philosophy, 'although the *result* [...] is simple, its method cannot be if it is to arrive at that result' (Wittgenstein, 1975: 52). In CA, the complexities of the method involve other kinds of issues of validation.

Validation Through 'Next Turn'

Even though the meaning of any expression, if considered in isolation, is extremely open ended, any utterance that is produced in talk-in-interaction will be locally interpreted by the participants of that interaction. In the first place, their interpretation is displayed in the next actions after the utterance. Hence, any interpretations that conversation analysts may suggest can be subjected to the 'proof procedure' outlined by Sacks et al. (1974: 728–729): the next turn will show whether the interactants themselves treat the utterance in ways that are in accordance with the analyst's interpretation.

Therefore, in Extract 1 shown above, the utterance produced by B in lines 5–8 provides a proof procedure for the interpretation suggested by Pomerantz concerning A's turn in line 4. (What Pomerantz suggested was that 'telling my side' (what A did in line 4) can operate as a 'fishing device', which indirectly elicits an authoritative version of the events from the interlocutor.) And as we see, Pomerantz's interpretation passes the test: in lines 5–8, B gives her first-hand account of what had happened.

In much everyday conversation analytic work, things are not as nice and simple as in Extract 1: the next turns may be ambiguous in relation to the action performed in the preceding turn. However, the 'proof procedure' provided by the next turn remains the primordial criterion of validity that must be used as much as possible in all conversation analytic work.

Deviant Case Analysis

By examining the relations between successive turns of talk, conversation analysts aim at establishing *regular patterns* of interaction (Heritage, 1995 and in this volume). The patterns concern relations between actions (such as the relations between 'telling my side' and 'giving an authoritative report' in the case of 'fishing' described above). After having established a pattern, the analyst's next task is to search for and examine *deviant cases*: cases where 'things go differently' – most typically, cases where an element of the suggested pattern is not associated with the other expected elements. The deviant case analysis in CA closely resembles the technique of 'analytic induction' often used in ethnographic studies (see Silverman, 2001: 237–238). For the analyst, those cases that do not fit the inductively constructed pattern are deviant. Rather than putting aside these discrepant cases, the analyst is encouraged to focus particular attention on them.

In her paper on 'fishing', Pomerantz (1980: 186–187) presents a deviant case in which a description of events displaying its producer's 'limited access' does *not* lead the other party to disclose her authorized version of the event:

(2)

```
1 A:   ...dju j'see me pull us?=

2 B:   =.hhh No:. I wz trying you all day. en the line

3      wz busy fer like hours

4 A:   ohh:::::, oh:::::, .hhhhhh We::ll, hh I'm g'nna

5      c'm over in a little while help yer brother ou:t

6 B:   Goo:d
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 7 A:   Goo.hhh Cuz I know he needs some he::lp,
 8      ((mournfully))
 9 B:   .hh Ye:ah. Yeh he'd mention' that tihday.=
10 A:   =M-hm,=
11 B:   .hhh Uh:m, .tlk .hhh Who wih yih ta:lking to.
```

(Pomerantz, 1980: 186–187)

In Extract 2 above, B reports her experience about A's line having been busy (lines 2–3). In terms of the interactional pattern identified by Pomerantz, this kind of telling should make relevant a subsequent disclosure of the details of the event by the other, more knowledgeable party. In the extract above, however, this does not happen. Instead, A shifts the topic in her subsequent turn (lines 4–5). Therefore, within the framework of the analysis of 'fishing', we can consider Extract 2 as a deviant case.

In an insightful paper, Clayman and Maynard (1994) have outlined three different ways that deviant cases, like Extract 2, can be dealt with:

1   Sometimes deviant cases can be shown to exhibit the interactants' orientation to the *same* considerations and normative orientations that produce the 'regular' cases. In those cases, something in the conduct of the participants discloses that they, too, treat the case as one involving a departure from the expected course of events. If the deviant cases show this kind of property, they provide *additional support* for the analyst's initial claim that the regularities found in the first phase of the data analysis 'are methodically produced and oriented to by the participants as normative organizations of action' (Heritage, 1988: 131). Extract 2 above is an example of this type of deviant case. After A has failed to respond to B's initial 'fishing' turn by an authorized report of the events, B asks directly to whom A had been talking (line 10). Through her question, she openly requests the information which the fishing device (lines 2–3), according to Pomerantz's analysis, solicited indirectly. This shift to open information seeking after an unsuccessful 'fishing' attempt indirectly confirms B's initial orientation to the 'fishing' as a device which can be used in indirect solicitation of information.

2   Clayman and Maynard (1994) point out, however, that there are also deviant cases that cannot be integrated within the analysts' construction of the participants' orientations that normally produce the regular cases. In dealing with these cases, the analyst may need to change his or her construction of the participants' orientations. A classical example is Schegloff's (1968) analysis of a single deviant case in his corpus of 500 telephone call openings. In this single case, unlike the other 499, the caller spoke first. The analysis of that single case led Schegloff to abandon his initial hypothesis (according to which there is a norm obligating the answerer to speak first) and to reconceptualize the very first moves of telephone calls in terms of the adjacency pair 'summons (telephone ringing)–answer'. In the deviant case, the answerer did not produce the relevant second pair part, and, accordingly, the caller reissued the summons by speaking first.

3   There are also, however, deviant cases which cannot be integrated either into the existing or into a reconceptualized hypothesis concerning the participants' orientations (Clayman and Maynard, 1994). In these cases, an explanation can be sought from the individual contingencies of the single case. Normative orientations or strategic considerations other than those that usually inform the production of the pattern may be invoked by the participants in single cases, and these other orientations or considerations may explain the deviance.

In sum, deviant case analysis constitutes a central resource for testing hypotheses in conversation analytic work. Therefore, the researcher should consider the deviant cases not a nuisance, but a treasure. The meticulous analysis of those cases gives impetus, strength and rigour to the development of the analytic arguments.

Validity of Claims Concerning the Institutional Character of Interaction

In both qualitative and quantitative research, a central dimension of validity involves the correspondence between a theoretical paradigm and the observations made by the researcher. 'Construct validity' is a term that is often used in this context (Kirk and Miller, 1986: 22; Bryman, 2004: 73). It involves the relations between theoretical concepts and the observations that are supposed to represent those concepts. As was pointed out above, the primary emphasis that CA places on naturalistic description de-intensifies the relevance of many ordinary concerns of construct validity. However, the expansion of conversation analytic research on institutional interaction (see Heritage, this volume; Drew and Heritage, 1992; Arminen, 2005; Heritage and Clayman, 2010) has reinforced the need to consider the relation between observations and concepts also in conversation analytic studies.

In conversation analytic research on institutional interaction, a central question of validity is this: what grounds does the researcher have for claiming that the talk he or she is focusing on is in any way 'connected to' some institutional framework? The fact that a piece of interaction takes place in a hospital or in an office, for example, does not per se determine the institutional character of that particular interaction (Drew and Heritage, 1992: 18–21). Institutional roles, tasks and arrangements may or may not be present in any particular interactions; they may or may not be

present at particular *moments* in particular interactions. If they are, the conversation analytic programme presupposes their presence is observable to the participants and the analyst alike.

Schegloff (1987, 1991, 1992b) points out that there are indefinitely many aspects of context potentially available for any interaction: we may categorize one another on the basis of gender, age, social class, education, occupation, income, race, and so on, and we may understand the setting of our interaction accordingly. In the momentary unfolding of interaction, Schegloff argues, 'the parties, singly and together, select and display in their conduct which of the indefinitely many aspects of context they are making relevant, or are invoking, for the immediate moment' (1987: 219).

Awareness of this 'problem of relevance' requires the professional analyst to proceed with caution. There is a danger of 'importing' institutional context to data. The professional analyst may be tempted to assume, without going into the details of data, that this or that feature of talk is an indication of a particular context (such as 'medical authority' or 'professional dominance') having affected the interaction. Such stipulation for context may, Schegloff (1991: 24–25) argues, result in the analysis being terminated prematurely, so that the inherent organization within the talk is not thoroughly understood. Phenomena which in the beginning may appear as indications of the workings of an 'institutional context' may in a more thorough examination be even better understood without reference to the 'institutional context'.

A case in point is provided by a recent study by Curl and Drew (2008) on the choice between two request forms: in asking for services, we can say either *'could you do X?'* or, in a more complex and apparently deferential way, *'I was wondering if you could do X'*. In the beginning of their analytic work, Curl and Drew paid attention to the fact that the choice of request form seemingly and broadly corresponded to the nature of the encounter – *could you do X* format was used in everyday encounters, and the more complex format in medical encounters (the patient making requests to the doctor). So, one might suggest, was the institutional context the 'reason' for the choice? But Curl and Drew did not terminate their analysis there. By exploring both everyday and institutional data, they eventually came to the conclusion that there is a more local explanation. The choice between two request forms embodied the speaker's orientation to her *entitlement to make the request* and the *contingency of granting* of the request. Crucial evidence for this more local explanation was cases from medical encounters where the more simple format was used (in which cases the speaker observably oriented herself to her entitlement and to non-contingency of granting) and cases from everyday encounters where the more complex format was used, and in which the speaker observably oriented herself to her lack of entitlement to ask, and to the granting being contingent. Thus, by not terminating their analysis prematurely by using the 'institutional context' as an overall explanation,

Curl and Drew were able to show in detail what the participants locally oriented to in their choice of request form. This is not to say that institutional context did not have any relation to this choice. In distributional terms, it clearly did. But the actual vehicle of this relation, the participants' consideration which, as it were, mediated or embodied their institutional relations, was their orientation to entitlement and contingency.

Schegloff (1991, 1992b) also maintains that it is not sufficient to say that a particular institutional context is oriented to 'in general' by the participants in interaction, but, instead, it has to be shown how specifiable aspects of the context are consequential for specifiable aspects of the interaction. What is said, when it is said, and how, and by whom, and to whom, may invoke the context; the goal of the conversation analytic research is to explicate exactly how the things said brought forward the context.

Schegloff's emphasis on the procedural consequentiality of the context has an important corollary. If a piece of research can pin down specific procedural links between a context and talk-in-interaction, it is likely that these observations not only are relevant in terms of analysis of detailed organization of interaction, but also contribute to the understanding of the context per se. Standard social scientific understandings of professional and other contexts are often based on rough generalizations concerning the professionals' tasks, clients' roles and the relations between the two. Conversation analytic research goes far beyond such generalizations. Thus, for example, the studies of Heath (1992), Maynard (1992) and myself (Peräkylä, 2006) on the delivery of diagnostic news have involved not only a detailed description of the specific practices found in medical consultations, but also a specification of a central aspect of that context, namely the dimensions and character of medical authority.

Thus, the relevance and consequences of institutional context are to be demonstrated by the researcher. In demonstrating them, the researcher will focus on particular phenomena in interaction, such as lexical choice, turn design, sequence organization and overall structural organization (Drew and Heritage, 1992: 29–45; Heritage, this volume). Where the workings of context will be found in a particular piece of research cannot be predicted in advance. This unpredictability arises from the inductive character of the conversation analytic enterprise; it causes both the fundamental difficulty and the exceptional fascination of conversation analytic research.

Generalizability of Conversation Analytic Findings

A crucial dimension of validity in any research concerns the generalizability of findings (Bryman, 2004: 76–77, 284–285). Owing to their work-intensive character,

many conversation analytic studies are based on relatively small databases. How widely can the results, derived from relatively small samples, be generalized? This character of the problem is closely dependent on the type of conversation analytic research. In studies of ordinary conversation (everyday interactions outside specific institutional settings), the baseline assumption is that the results are or should be generalizable to the whole domain of ordinary conversations, and to a certain extent even across linguistic and cultural boundaries. Recent studies where conversational practices in different cultures are compared suggest that, unlike some earlier anthropological research has presumed, there are indeed universal features in conversation, such as avoidance of overlapping talk and minimization of silences between turns (see Stivers et al., 2009; Sidnell, 2007).

In conversation analytical study of institutional interaction, the problem is posed in different terms. The key question regarding generalization is this: do the findings of a particular study hold true in settings other than the one that was studied in this particular case? The answer to this question can be articulated in different ways, depending on the institution that has been studied.

Some types of institutional setting are, by now, covered by set of cumulative studies of CA. Primary care medical consultation is a case in point. There are strings of studies of CA on different phases of the consultation: opening, verbal and physical examination, diagnosis, treatment recommendation, and the like (see Heritage and Maynard, 2006). Any new study on medical consultation can, and has to, reflect its findings in the light of the earlier studies, specifying the results of the earlier ones. One thing that makes this cumulativeness possible is, it needs to be added, the universality of the medical institution. In many ways, medical consultations in Finland, the US or India are likely to be similar, and therefore one study can add new details of the picture drawn in the earlier ones.

Comparison across institutions is another avenue for generalization. What is being compared can be an action or a practice that can be found in different institutional settings, and which takes somewhat different shapes in these different settings. Drew (2003), for example, focuses on *formulations*, i.e. utterances that propose a gist or upshot of the preceding talk (cf. Heritage and Watson, 1979). He compares the uses of formulations in four settings – news interviews, workplace negotiations, radio call-in programmes and psychotherapy – and shows how this practice is shaped differently in each setting, so as to serve its specific contingencies. In similar vein, Ruusuvuori and Voutilainen (2010; see also Voutilainen, et al., 2010) compare professionals' responses to patients' emotional expressions in general practice, homeopathy and psychotherapy, showing how the different responses are geared to facilitate the different professional tasks in each setting. Thus, for example, in general practice, the professionals' empathizing utterances are geared to close down the discussion on emotional experiences (and to move on to medical business), whereas in psychotherapy they project topicalization and further talk of that experience.

It is likely that as the databases and analyses of institutional interaction gradually accumulate, studies like Drew's and Ruusuvuori and Voutilainen's will become more common. The comparative approach directly tackles the question of generalizability by demonstrating the similarities and differences across a number of settings. For the time being, however, many studies on institutional interaction are more like case studies.

Many case studies on institutional interaction are based on data collected from one or a only a few sites. The number of subjects involved in such studies usually is relatively small. There are perhaps two overlapping ways in which issues of generalization can be tackled in case studies. One involves *finding the generic from the particular*: through the study of a single case, the researcher can come up with results that constitute claims or hypotheses regarding the organization of human interaction in a most generic level. Some studies by Charles Goodwin are a case in point. In studies that focus on particular occasions in interaction, such as a schoolchild doing homework with her father (2007), students and scholars undertaking archaeological excavation in a field school (2003) or chemists undertaking an experiment (1997), Goodwin shows 'the constellation of language, environment, body and action' in bringing about joint attention, action packages and, ultimately, human social and cognitive worlds (see esp. Goodwin, 2007: 61). In other words, Goodwin is not primarily trying to tell us what is peculiar in doing homework, archaeological excavation or chemistry. Instead, he uses activities in these settings as specimens on the ways in which humans (in general) employ the resources of language, body and physical environment in bringing about their shared worlds that they attend to and know about. In this way, we might say, Goodwin finds the generic from the particular.

The other way to tackle the problem of generalization in case studies involves the notion of *possibility*. In terms of the traditional 'distributional' understanding of generalizability, case studies on institutional interaction cannot offer much. Studying one or a few sites only does not warrant conclusions concerning similarities in the professionals' and their clients' conduct in different settings. The problem may be particularly acute if the professional practice that is studied is informed by specific professional theory: for example, psychotherapists working in the framework of 'solution-oriented therapy' interact with their clients in ways that are distinctively different from those of psychoanalysts or other different theoretical inclinations (see Peräkylä et al., 2008). The concept of possibility, however, gives a new perspective to this. *Social practices that are possible*, i.e. *possibilities of language use*, are the central objects of all conversation analytic case studies on interaction in particular institutional settings. The possibility of various practices can be considered generalizable even if the practices are not actualized in similar ways across different settings. For example, in my study on AIDS counselling in a London teaching hospital (Peräkylä, 1995), the research objects were specific questioning practices used by

the counsellors and their clients. These practices arose from a particular therapeutic theory and they were to a large extent developed in the particular hospital that my data were from. Therefore, it is possible that they are not used anywhere else exactly in those specific ways that were analysed in my study (see Silverman (1997) for some observations on the wide variety of approaches in AIDS counselling in the UK). Hence my results cannot be directly generalizable to any other site where AIDS counselling is done.

However, the results of my study can be considered descriptions of questioning techniques that are possible across a wide variety of settings. More specifically, the study involves an effort to describe in detail how these questioning techniques were made possible: what kind of management of turn-taking, participation frameworks, turn design, sequence organization, and so on, was needed in order for the participants to set up scenes where 'circular questioning', 'live open supervision' and 'hypothetical future-oriented questioning' were done? The study showed how these practices are made possible through the very details of the participants' action. As possibilities, the practices that I analysed are very likely to be generalizable. There is no reason to think that they could not be made possible by any competent member of (at least any Western) society. In this sense, this study produced generalizable results. The results were not generalizable as descriptions of what other counsellors or other professionals do with their clients, but they were generalizable as descriptions of what any counsellor or other professional, with his or her clients, *can* do, given that he or she has the same array of interactional competencies as the participants of the AIDS counselling sessions have.

Quantification

Use of large databases and quantification involves another kind of strategy for ensuring the generalizability (and also other aspects of the validity) of the conversation analytical research findings. Some of the practices studied by conversation analysts lend themselves to 'coding and counting'. For example, in Clayman and Heritage's (2002) study on question design in presidential press conferences in the US, the journalists' questions were coded regarding the degree of 'adversarialness' that they exhibited. Calculations were made to show how the relative proportions of questions, showing different degrees of adversarialness, changed over time. It was shown that the journalists have become much less deferential and more aggressive in their treatment of the president. Another example of successful quantification is offered in Stivers and Majid's (2007) study on racial bias in routine paediatric medical consultations. Their focus of attention was whether the doctor addressed his or her questions to the parents or to the children in such consultations. Through statistical analysis, they demonstrated that black children and Latino children of low-education parents were less likely to be selected to answer questions than their white peers of the same age, irrespective of education. Thus, there was an implicit race bias in the doctor's way of conducting interaction.

At least two issues are critical regarding the applicability of quantitative techniques in CA. First, straightforward coding of interactional practices is not always possible. Many practices involve such complexity that large numbers of cases cannot be subsumed under simple (and mutually exclusive) categories. If complex cases are forced under simple categories, something that is analytically important may be lost from sight. This kind of consideration has led Schegloff (1993: 117) to propose the possibility that interaction might be orderly 'at the level of the singular occurrence only' and not orderly, in any relevant way, at the aggregate level. The other problem concerns sampling (Silverman, 2001: 249). In order for quantitative analysis to provide a basis for generalization, the selection of cases to be studied should follow adequate statistical procedures so as to ensure their representativeness. In studies of CA, anything like random sampling is rarely possible. The data collection is too laborious and institutional conditions too strict. In researching medical consultations or psychotherapy, for example, the researcher may have to work with the kind of data to which he or she can get access. If the relation between the sample and the population remains unclear, statistical tests, if they are used, may yield results that should be understood heuristically only (as in Peräkylä, 2006). This does not need to be a reason not to use quantitative techniques at all, but it is a consideration that restricts their import in terms of generalizability of findings.

Bearing these restrictions in mind, statistical analysis may be useful in particular conversation analytical research designs. These include research designs that concern relations between distinct interactional variables in standardized forms of encounters (like the studies on diagnosis by Peräkylä, 2006), or historical change in such encounters (like the changes of presidential press conferences studied by Clayman and Heritage, 2002), or relations between social categories and interactional practices (like the relations between race and interactional practices studied by Stivers and Majid, 2007). (For a more thorough account on this, see Heritage, 1995.) In any case, however, the backbone of conversation analytical work involves qualitative case-by-case analysis.

Conclusion

At the beginning of this chapter, I pointed out that the specific procedures of securing validity in different types of qualitative research are not always the same. The aim of this chapter has been to give an overview of the imperatives faced and solutions found in conversation analytic research. The main procedures of validation

of the researcher's analytic claims in all conversation analytic research include the analysis of the next speaker's interpretation of the preceding action, and deviant case analysis. Validation also involves the anchoring in data of the claims concerning the relevance of an institutional context of interaction, comparisons within and between institutional settings, issues of generalizability of the results of case studies, as well as use of quantitative techniques.

Some of these procedures of validation have to do with CA only. Especially, that is the case in the use of the speaker's utterance as an instance of validation for the researcher's interpretation of the import of the preceding action. This 'next turn proof procedure' is a 'fingerprint' of conversation analytical data analysis: it is a procedure of validation that is available only to an approach based on sequential analysis of recorded interaction. However, as Silverman (2007: chapter 3) has argued, *all* qualitative research can be improved by paying attention to data sequences.

Questions about the specific particulars of interaction that may or may not convey the participants' orientation to institutional context might not arise in many other approaches, which are not concerned with the details of speech and other action in the same way as CA. But some other procedures of validation are shared between CA and other approaches. Deviant case analysis has its origins in ethnographic research, and the procedures employed in CA are quite similar to those employed there. Furthermore, questions about comparison within and between institutions, as well as other issues related to generalization of research results, might well arise for example in ethnographic studies. And, at a more general level, the considerations of validity in CA are indeed similar to those in any other kind of qualitative research: all serious qualitative research involves meticulous testing and consideration of the truthfulness of analytic claims.

Summary

The specific procedures of securing validity in different types of qualitative research are not the same, even though there is a considerable overlap between them. This chapter offered an overview of the imperatives faced and solutions found in conversation analytic research. The main procedures of validation of the researcher's analytic claims in all conversation analytic research include the analysis of the next speaker's interpretation of the preceding action, and deviant case analysis. Validation also involves the anchoring in data of the claims concerning the relevance of an institutional context of interaction, comparisons within and between institutional settings, showing generic patterns of interaction or possibilities of language use, in the results of case studies, as well as use of quantitative techniques. Validation through consideration of the next utterance is a procedure used mainly in CA,

whereas analysis of deviant case is used also in ethnography and other types of qualitative research.

Future Prospec

Regarding techniques of validation, the use of quantitative techniques will become more frequent, as well as the comparisons within and between institutions. The case study design will prevail especially in video-based analysis of complex working environments (see Heath, this volume).

Question

* What does 'validity' mean?
* Why might there be different techniques of validation in different qualitative approaches?
* What procedures of validation do conversation analysis and ethnography share?

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Internet Links

Ethnomethodology and conversation analysis newsletter *Ethno/CA News:*
www2.fmg.uva.nl/emca/
The International Institute for Ethnomethodology and Conversation Analysis:
www.iiemca.org/

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Three Aspects of Writing Qualitative Research: Practice, Genre, and Audience

Amir Marvasti

Abstract

Focusing on writing as both a process and the outcome of qualitative research, this chapter offers novice researchers a framework for assessing their work. In particular, writing qualitative research is presented as a three-facet enterprise that involves practice, genre, and audiences. Practice refers to the ongoing, fluid dimensions as was well as the basic skills or craft of writing. The discussion of genre deals with the various stylistic choices available to social scientists, particularly to qualitative researchers. Finally, audience selection addresses the strategic choices authors have to consider as they try to publish their work and make it accessible to various audiences. It is argued that a 'perfect paper' is one that strikes a balance between these three dimensions.

Introduction

The field of qualitative research is rich with analytical options, representational styles, and publication outlets. Questions about how much data, how to analyze the data, how to write it all down, and what to include in the final manuscript become progressively more difficult as one learns about the variety of qualitative paradigms. Many of these issues have been addressed elsewhere in this book and are beyond the focus of this chapter. Here I focus on writing qualitative research.