

Individual ethnography homework: Telephone call openings

Due: In class, Thursday, 9 Mar

Transcribe (write down) the exact words of the first four turns of three phone conversations you have over the next two days. ("One turn" means one person speaks.) Then write a paragraph comparing your data with the telephone call openings discussed in the Weilenmann article on Mobile Phones (online; the section titled "Telephone Conversations and Conversation Analysis").

Group presentation assignment: Analyzing politeness

DUE: In class, Thursday, 23 March

Assignment: Collect at least two brief, real conversations of a similar type (for example, two complaints, two requests, two invitations), but in different situations (for example, between people of different levels of intimacy or power). Analyze the politeness strategies used in each conversation and explain any similarities and differences you find. Present your results in a poster (see below for exact details).

The conversations you report must be real ones, not ones made up just for this assignment. But you may try to *provoke* these conversations. For example, members of your group might try making the same, somewhat difficult, request of two different people. You can tell them afterwards that it was just for a class, as long as the conversation is serious when it happens. Alternatively, you can listen in on ordinary conversations (for example, on the bus), without entering into them yourselves. You are also free to use email "conversations."

Be sure to record the *exact words* of the conversation immediately after it happens, otherwise you won't be able to complete the assignment. It will help if the conversation is relatively brief—no more than a few turns.

Your "poster" should consist of seven 8.5 x 11 typewritten sheets:

1. The title of your poster, and the names of the group members actively participating.
2. A brief description of the situation behind Conversation #1, plus the exact conversation itself.
3. The same for Conversation #2.
4. An analysis of *all* the politeness strategies used in Conversation #1, positive and/or negative. Pick out specific language in the conversation, and identify what politeness strategy is being used in it.
5. The same for Conversation #2.
6. Compare & contrast the strategies in the two conversations. How were they similar? How different?
7. Your conclusions. *Why* were the strategies similar or different? If the strategies were similar, then explain why people in different situations chose similar strategies. If the strategies were different, then explain why: what about the situation induced the speakers to use these different strategies. Overall, what generalizations about politeness can you make from this data?

Note: Use as large a font as possible, so your poster will be easy to read. Feel free to use bullet points, not full sentences, as long as they can be understood.