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Discourse Studies 2007; 9; 784

DOI: 10.1177/1461445607082580

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Discourse Studies
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 (Los Angeles, London,
 New Delhi and Singapore)
 www.sagepublications.com
 Vol 9(6): 784–808
 10.1177/1461445607082580

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ABSTRACT The entextualization and recontextualization of speech via transcription is a fundamental methodology of discourse analysis. However, particularly for researchers concerned with sociopolitical issues in discourse, transcription is not a straightforward tool but a highly problematic yet necessary form of linguistic representation. Recent commentators have critiqued the inconsistency of researcher transcripts; by contrast, this article seeks to understand rather than remedy such variability, conceptualizing diversity in transcripts as a kind of linguistic variation. Examining four different types of variation in transcription practice – global format choices based on an analytic focus on content versus form, variation in the details of transcription format in reproducing one's own or others' transcripts, orthographic variation in a single transcript, and variation in translation – the article argues that although reflection about the transcription process cannot overcome the difficulties inherent in this methodology, it can allow scholars to be more attentive to their own transcription choices and their limitations and to make these explicit in their writing.

KEY WORDS: *entextualization, linguistic representation, methodology, orthography, reflexivity, translation*

Introduction

As discourse analysis in its various forms has established itself as a fundamental methodology throughout the human sciences, transcription has become a central tool for the analysis and representation of spoken language. Perhaps unsurprisingly, sociocultural linguistic research has given some of the earliest and most extensive scholarly scrutiny to the topic, from concerns with the phonetic representation of dialectal features in dialectology and sociolinguistics (e.g. Bailey, 1986; Bailey et al., 2005; Macaulay, 1991; Miethaner, 2000) to wide-ranging explorations of the representation of interactional detail in discourse analysis (e.g. Edwards and Lampert, 1993; Flewitt, 2006; Norris, 2002;

Ochs, 1979) to reflections on the analytic role and ontological status of transcription in conversation analysis (e.g. Ashmore and Reed, 2000; Jefferson, 1985, 2004; Psathas and Anderson, 1990; ten Have, 2002) to the problematic process of entextualizing culture via transcription within linguistic anthropology (e.g. Haviland, 1996; Sherzer, 1994; Tedlock, 1990; Urban, 1996). Moreover, other fields that rely on recordings of spoken language as an important source of data, such as folklore and the qualitative social sciences, are also beginning to articulate more fully the methodological and representational issues that arise in transcription (e.g. Fine, 1984; MacLean et al., 2004; Parker, 1997; Powers, 2005; Tilley, 2003).

Within both sociocultural linguistic scholarship and the language sciences more generally, an issue of enduring concern with respect to the transcription of spoken language is the reliability and validity of transcripts (e.g. Ferber, 1991; Kerswill and Wright, 1990; Lane et al., 1996; Patterson et al., 1996; Pitt et al., 2005; Roberts and Robinson, 2004; Selting et al., 1998; Van Borsel, 1989). Most of the studies that address this topic conceptualize differences between written representations of the same spoken data as a methodological obstacle and propose techniques for overcoming this perceived problem. Among some authors there is an emerging tradition of lament concerning variability across transcribers and transcripts, a phenomenon usually characterized by critics as 'inconsistency', 'inaccuracy', or 'error'. In only a few cases do researchers recognize that differences between transcribers or other forms of variability within the transcription process can be of analytic value (e.g. Pye et al., 1988).

Unlike much of this previous work, my goal is not to problematize variability but to understand its sources and its effects on transcripts. For this reason I refer to representational differences in transcription not as 'inconsistency' or 'error' but as 'variation'. In choosing this term I mean to invoke the tradition of variationist sociolinguistics, which takes as its fundamental principle the observation that variability is inherent in all language use. Although variationists have not taken the step of viewing variability as likewise inherent in the process of creating a research transcript, such a perspective invites researchers of spoken language to step back from efforts to 'fix' transcription (in both senses of the word) and instead to examine the act of transcribing as a socioculturally embedded linguistic and metalinguistic practice.

From this perspective, transcription is not solely a research methodology for understanding discourse but also, and just as importantly, a sociocultural practice of representing discourse. Inspired by the notion of intertextuality in Bakhtin's (e.g. 1981, 1984) work, linguistic anthropologists have demonstrated that the process of capturing the fluidity of social interaction on the printed page is a form of entextualization; that is, it instantiates spoken discourse as a movable object that can be transferred to new contexts (Bauman and Briggs, 1990; Silverstein and Urban, 1996). In this process, represented discourse may take on new textual forms as well as new contextual meanings. Indeed, linguistic-anthropological research on the circulation of discourse representations, both as transcripts and in other forms, makes clear that variation is far more common than homogeneity, for represented discourse necessarily enacts

new functions as it enters new contexts of use. Thus in seeking to understand variability in the scholarly practice of linguistic transcription – as, indeed, in any practice of linguistic representation – the processes of entextualization and recontextualization are of paramount importance (see also Slembrouck, 1999).

In this article I consider four different ways, among many others, in which spoken discourse that is conceptualized as ‘the same’ nevertheless shows variability in its transcribed representation in different contexts. The first type of variation involves the basic research function of transcription, which yields radically different global representations of the ‘same’ stretch of talk depending on whether the researcher is focused primarily on discourse content or whether her analytic interest also includes discourse structure. The second type of variation is based on differences, both unintentional and deliberate, in the minute details of notation and format that may occur when researchers reproduce their own or others’ transcripts for analysis. The third type of variation involves orthographic variability within a single transcript and its relationship to phonological variation. Finally, the fourth type of variation concerns languages other than English (or whatever may be the dominant language of the research context); this type of variation is rooted in differences in the translation of the ‘same’ morpheme across utterances and speakers within a single transcript. Each type of variation has potentially significant analytical and political consequences. Yet I will argue that it is futile to seek entirely to eradicate any of these forms of variation from transcription practice. Rather, it is necessary for researchers to understand the motivations and effects of variation as an inevitable part of the transcription process and of linguistic representation more generally.

Variation in the global representation of talk

One of the difficulties with discussing transcription as a sociocultural practice is that it is likely to make researchers feel self-conscious about our own shortcomings as transcribers. Since I discuss the work of other scholars later in this article, it is useful to start by looking critically at some of my own research, in keeping with the spirit of reflexivity that motivates this project (see also Bucholtz, 2001). Example (1a) is taken from a conference paper about nerdy American teenagers that I presented in 1996 and that was published in the conference proceedings in 1998:

(1a)

Fred: We’re always the nerds. We like it. We’re glad to be the nerds and the squares. We don’t drink, we don’t do any drugs, we just get naturally high, we do insane funny things. And we’re smart. We get good grades. (Bucholtz, 1998: 122)

The format of this transcript, involving a speaker attribution followed by a colon and then the represented speech as a block quotation, provides little information about the structural details of the speaker’s talk, such as prosody, pauses, repairs or hesitation markers, or other features of interest to discourse analysts. This general format is characteristic of the transcription of spoken discourse in

non-linguistic research in the human and social sciences, which is carried out for the purpose not of analyzing discourse structure but of examining discourse content. This was in fact my own goal in originally transcribing (1a) in this way. In the same article, I included other data transcribed in a more interactionally adequate way, and so my decision was not based on disinterest in or ignorance of interactional issues in discourse analysis. Rather, I was treating Example (1a) as an illustration of an ethnographic claim, that the speaker was a self-identified nerd. I characterized this example as ‘the nerd manifesto’, viewing it as an encapsulating statement of what it means to be a nerd.

I continue to believe that my interpretation of this example is basically correct, but I am far less confident in the transcript that I used to support that interpretation. Several years later, I returned to the original recording and was astonished and horrified to realize that in the interests of focusing on content, my transcript had systematically erased every interactional nuance of the data. My retranscription of the example, restoring some of these missing details, appears as Example (1b) (see Appendix for transcription conventions).

(1b)

- 1 Mary: [So]
 2 Fred: [We’re al]ways the nerds.
 3 We like it.
 4 Mary: You@’re the nerds?
 5 Fred: We’re <creaky> {glad} to be the ner:ds,
 6 a@nd the squa:res and,
 7 Mary: Is that what
 8 Fred: [we don’t–]
 9 Mary: [you say] you are?
 10 Fred: <[i?]> Well,
 11 we don’t exactly s:–
 12 We don’t always say it,=
 13 =I say it. n@
 14 Mary: @@[@!]
 15 Fred: [But-]
 16 Mary: @ You’re [[prou:d.]]
 17 Fred: [[you]] know,
 18 Mary: [@@]
 19 Fred: [we don’t–]
 20 We just don’t (0.5) drink,
 21 we d[on’t (. <rapid> {d]o
 22 Mary: [Mm.]
 23 Fred: any drugs,}
 24 we don’t–
 25 we just,
 26 <smiling voice quality> {get ↑naturally high},
 27 Mary: A[ha:.]
 28 Fred: [:@:]
 29 Mary: [[So that makes you nerds?]]
 30 Fred: [[We just do insane]] funny things.=
 31 =↑I don’t know,

- 32 maybe.
 33 (0.6)
 34 Mary: So:=
 35 Fred: =And we're smart.
 36 We get <[e?]>-
 37 good grades.
 38 (1.3) Mostly.

It is obvious that my original transcript was not merely woefully inadequate but dangerously inaccurate in its representation of the interaction. Fred's comments are not the product of an autonomous, triumphant voice of nerd pride but are rather the result of considerable co-construction (and obstruction) by me as the researcher. Her stated views, while clearly strongly held, are much more hedged and halting in their expression than my first transcript acknowledged. And although I still can find some sympathy for the graduate student I was at the time, frantically finishing my conference paper at three o'clock in the morning, I also have to ask my younger self, 'Couldn't you at least have included ellipses to show that you left stuff out?' (There are ellipses in the larger extract from which this example comes, but they indicate the omission of much larger chunks of text.) It is an even greater source of chagrin for me that I produced the original transcript at a time when I was becoming deeply interested in transcription as a sociopolitical discourse practice. In fact, only a few weeks before I presented this example I had presented at another conference a paper entitled 'The Politics of Transcription', which I eventually published as an article critically reflecting on transcription as a powerful form of representation both within and beyond the academy (Bucholtz, 2000).

I start my discussion with this confessional tale because, personal embarrassment aside, it vividly highlights the stark differences in the global formatting of transcripts produced for different research purposes, such as analysis of content versus structure. Although in this case I restored the interactional dimension of the talk in my later use of this data excerpt (Bucholtz, in preparation), transcribing for content is not inherently problematic, even for researchers who focus primarily on interactional structure. Sometimes a simplified transcript can make a point more concisely and clearly than a detailed transcript, provided, of course, that it includes, at a minimum, an indication of any talk that was omitted, a standard I failed to meet in the above case.¹

Variation in notation and format

Although content-driven global representations like (1a) above are not generally embraced by linguistically oriented discourse analysts, the issue of transcription that has attracted some of the sharpest critical commentary among scholars in the field is not this practice but rather the occurrence of inconsistencies in the reproduction of technically detailed transcripts in print. Researchers and textbook authors may reproduce others' transcribed data in their own work to make an analytic point, or they may use the same example from their own research in more than one publication or in more than one place in a single publication. In

the process of recontextualizing a transcript in a new discourse context, changes may be introduced; as researchers have demonstrated, such changes are quite easy to find in published texts by even the most respected scholars and from even the most prestigious presses. The scholars who have commented most extensively on this phenomenon attribute such changes to either author carelessness (Kitzinger, 1998) or an unwieldy system (O'Connell and Kowal, 1990, 2000). Clearly, it is desirable to preserve a transcript as faithfully as possible when quoting it. Yet the critical perspectives that have been advanced optimistically imply that transcribers can achieve or at least approximate the elusive goal of the accurate transcript if we simply change our practices. Accuracy is of course an important goal in transcription, but it is also, in the end, an impossible one. To track down inconsistencies in either researcher practices or transcription systems is thus an exercise that is only too easy. Instead, I seek to explore the consequences of such variation for analysis and representation.


To investigate these issues, I turn to a published example in which a researcher deliberately sets out to retranscribe – or rather, reformat – the data of another scholar. The researcher in question is Dell Hymes, who has made the retranslation and reanalysis of his own and others' data a centerpiece of his research program (e.g. Hymes, 1981). A passionate advocate for the careful representation of data, Hymes is critical of transcripts and translations of Native American narrative in which 'editing censors structure' (1981: 7). His work often revisits earlier analyses to propose layers of structure that had been previously overlooked, and to present this newfound structure in the form of a revised transcript.²

Hymes (1996) undertakes this sort of reanalysis of some data collected and transcribed by Sarah Michaels (1983). The focus of his discussion is Michaels's transcript of a narrative told by an African American girl named Leona. The purpose of Michaels's work was to document how the educational practice of sharing time, or show and tell, reproduces social inequality when European American teachers fail to recognize the structure of African American children's narratives, which she argues is primarily signaled through intonation and pausing rather than lexical means. Hymes's reanalysis builds on Michaels's original insights to demonstrate the existence of additional structure within Leona's narrative. In doing so, he presents the transcript of Leona's story three times: once as a reproduction of Michaels's original transcript and twice more with revisions to indicate the additional elements of poetic structure he finds in the story.

In her 1983 article, Michaels uses a version of John Gumperz's transcription system (see Gumperz and Berenz, 1993), but in reproducing her transcript in his text, Hymes deliberately changes some of Michaels's notation, partly for practical and partly for analytic reasons. These changes are noted (a bit unclearly and incompletely) in Hymes's text (1996: 183, n.7). Both sets of transcription conventions are given in Table 1.

Thus even before he reanalyzes her data, Hymes has altered Michaels's notational system, omitting markings on low fall and high rise tonal nuclei and changing the symbols for low rise tonal nuclei and sharing time intonation.

TABLE 1. *Transcription conventions in Michaels's (1983) original transcript of Leona's narrative and in Hymes's (1996) representation*

<i>Function</i>	<i>Michaels (1983)</i>	<i>Hymes (1996)</i>
non-final boundary; more to come	/	/
final boundary	//	//
measurable pause	. . . (three spaced dots)	... or . . .
accelerating tempo	acc.	acc.
low fall tonal nucleus	anything (grave accent below relevant syllable)	omitted
high fall tonal nucleus	ó (acute accent above relevant syllable)	ó (acute accent above relevant syllable)
low rise tonal nucleus	, (comma before relevant syllable)	<u>underlining</u> (of relevant syllable)
high rise tonal nucleus	' (apostrophe before relevant syllable)	omitted
sharing time intonation	 birthday (upward curving arrow above relevant syllable)	CAPS (described as 'bold small capitals'; Hymes, 1996: 177)

I do not find fault with these decisions, which seem to be motivated in the first instance by an understandable desire to create greater differentiation between transcription symbols, but they invite us to read the transcript rather differently.

Admittedly, at several points the original notations are hard to interpret. In part this is because Michaels, writing in a period before the widespread use of personal computers, was obliged to insert many transcription symbols manually in pen, which leads to a certain amount of ambiguity regarding form and placement. My characterization of her transcription conventions in Table 1 is therefore my own best guess as to how the symbols in her transcription key map onto their use in the transcript.³ In addition, as Hymes notes, Michaels does not provide any information about the use of the macron (e.g. line 2, *iē:*) or underlining (line 13, *eggs*); nor is there information about the use of the caret (line 12, *dollars*), which is not noted by Hymes. Figure 1a is Michaels's original transcript.

Figure 1b provides Hymes's representation of Michaels's transcript, including the changes noted in Table 1. Hymes apparently did not have access to the original recording and hence reanalyzed the transcript based on Michaels's published version. His reanalysis proposes some additional structure for Leona's narrative: in particular, he argues that the structure includes not simply lines but more specifically verses and stanzas. In a second iteration of the transcript (not shown here) he adds more line breaks to indicate this additional structure, and in a third version (Figure 1c) he changes the line numbers to reflect the line numbering system conventionally used in analyzing poetry.

Leona:

- 1 ,on ,George ,Washington's bⁱrthday /
- 2 I'm goin' / i^cē: / my gra:ndmother /
- 3 we never um / ,haven't seen her
since a long tⁱ:me /
- 4 and / . . . and she lives right (n) neā:r u:s /
- 5 and / . . . s^hē: / and she's gonna /
- 6 I'm (acc.) gonna spend the night over her hóuse /
- 7 and / . . . 'every w^eekend / she comes to take mé /
- 8 like on Saturdays and Suⁿdays /
awā:y / from h^o:me /
- 9 and (acc.) I spend the night over her hóuse /
- 10 and one day I spoⁱ:led her di:nner /
- 11 . . . um and we was having um / we was / um
- 12 'she 'paid ten dollars /
- 13 and I got eggs / . . . and ' stuff /
- 14 and I ,didn't ,even ,eat ,anything //

FIGURE 1A. The original published transcript of Leona's narrative (Michaels, 1983: 33)

Lines according to intonation and pause (Michaels)⁷

On George Washington's bIRTHday /	1
I'm goin' / ice / my grANDmother /	2
We never um / <u>h</u> aven't seen her since a long tIME /	3
and / ...she lives right nEAR us /	4
and /...she / and she's gonna /	5
I'm (acc.) gonna spend the night over her hóuse /	6
And /...every wEEKend / she comes to take mé /	7
like on Saturdays and SÚndays	8
awA Y / from hOme /	
and (acc.) I spend the night over her hóuse. /	9
and one day I spOiled her dinner /	10
...um and was having UM, / we was / um	11
she paid ten dollars /	12
and I got eggs / . . . and stuff /	13
and I <u>d</u> idn't even eat <u>a</u> nanything //	14

FIGURE 1B. Michaels's transcript of Leona's narrative as represented by Hymes (1996: 175)

Hymes's point is that we have to look closely at structure to find out how poetics and discourse meaning work and that transcription can help illuminate this process. Yet his transcript alters Michaels's in various ways that may be significant for analytic understanding of the discourse structure. Some of these differences are deliberate, such as the changes in verse structure and notation that I have already pointed out and which Hymes acknowledges. Others are

unacknowledged but consistent, such as the omission of both high rise tonal nuclei and phoneme lengthening (my interpretation of the colon symbol, which is unlisted in Michaels's transcription conventions). These omissions lose prosodic detail that is potentially important to the analysis, although they too appear to be deliberate.⁴ Aside from these systematic differences, there are 23 changes between Michaels's original transcript in Figure 1a and Hymes's final reformatted version of it (Figure 1c). There are also unacknowledged differences in capitalization and spacing between Hymes's representation of Michaels's transcript in Figure 1b and his own reformatted version in Figure 1c, such as which individual letters under the sharing time intonation contour are capitalized. I have not included such differences in my count. My analysis below focuses only on the differences between Figure 1a and Figure 1c. Interestingly, given this number of differences between the two transcripts, in the same text Hymes points to variations that he himself has found in the published transcripts of another researcher (1996: 183, n. 4), apparently without being aware of the range of changes that have been introduced into his own representation of Michaels's transcript.

Leona's story

On <u>G</u> orge <u>W</u> ashington's BIRTHday /	(A)	
I'm goin' /		
ice/		
my grANDmother /		
We never um/	5	
<u>h</u> aven't seen her since a long tI Me/		
and/ . . .		
she lives right nEAR us /		
And/ . . .		
she/	10	
and she's gonna /		
I'm (acc.) gonna spend the night over her hóuse /		
and/ . . .	(B)	
every wEEkend/		
she comes to take mé /	15	
like on Saturdays and Sún days/		
awA Y /		
from hOme /		
and (acc.) I spend the night over her hóuse. /		
and one day I spOILED her dinner /	(C) 20	
. . .um and we was having U M, /		
we was/ um		
she paid ten dollars /		
and I got eggs / . . .		
and stuff /	25	
and I <u>d</u> idn't <u>e</u> ven eat <u>a</u> n <u>y</u> thing //		

FIGURE 1C. Hymes's final reformatted version of Leona's narrative (1996: 180)

Between Figure 1a and Figure 1c there are four capitalization changes (*On* in line 1 and *And* in line 9 in Figure 1c); three insertions of punctuation or prosodic marking (the period after *house* in line 19, the comma after *U M* in line 21, and the underlining between *didn't* and *even* in line 26); two omissions of characters or words (*and* and *(n)*, both in line 8); two omissions of prosodic marking (the caret under *dollars* in line 23 and the grave accent below *anything* in line 26); two instances of a misplaced diacritic (the acute accent over the vowel rather than the consonant of *me* in line 15 and the acute accent over the *u* rather than the *n* of *Sunday* in line 16), and 11 changes in spacing, either by inserting a space between letters within the same word (*tI Me* in line 6, *awA Y* in line 17, and *U M* in line 21) or by omitting a space before the non-final boundary marker (/) (lines 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 13, 14, 22).

The capitalization changes do not seem to reflect the greater level of structure that Hymes introduces into his transcription and analysis. That is, although the newly capitalized words fall at the beginnings of lines, these do not correspond to the beginnings of stanzas, which Hymes demarcates with the letters (A), (B), and (C) in the right margin of the transcript. Rather, these, like the insertion of punctuation (lines 19, 21), may be due to the influence of ordinary writing conventions. The remaining format insertion occurs in line 26 of Hymes's transcript, where a blank space next to underlined text is also underlined to indicate special prosody. This insertion is likely to be a typesetter error and does not critically affect meaning.

Most of the spacing changes are likewise minor and are primarily due to the omission of the space after the boundary marker. This sort of change is again a probable typesetter error, and it has little effect on the interpretability of the revised transcript. More mysterious are the spaces between capital letters in some of the words under the sharing time contour, as in *tI Me* in line 6. Since this capitalization does not occur in the original transcript, it is hard to know why the spacing might have been inserted. In this case it may hamper the reader's interpretation of the transcript, because it may be read as iconically signaling lengthening. (In some cases, such as line 6, it coincides with lengthening, which is marked in the original transcript with a colon and was omitted by Hymes, but in others it does not.) Similarly, the omissions and changes in prosodic marking make it difficult to appreciate the role of prosody in the construction of the narrative, which both Michaels and Hymes foreground in their analyses.

Perhaps the most problematic changes in Hymes's transcript in Figure 1c are those that involve the omission of words or speech segments that appear in Michaels's transcript. Both omissions occur in line 8 of Hymes's transcript in Figure 1c (for context line 7 is included as well):

and/ . . .
she lives right nEAR us /

The corresponding line in Michaels's transcript (line 4 of Figure 1a) reads:

and / . . . and she lives right (n) near:u:s /

The parenthetical segment (*n*) in Michaels's transcript seems to indicate a false start.⁵ It is unclear why it might have been omitted by Hymes. Although its omission does not affect the analysis, it renders the transcript incomplete, since as noted above the usual minimal standard of linguistic transcription is to document all segmental information, even if suprasegmental details are not included. Finally, the omission of *and* is probably due to the fact that this word occurs twice in juxtaposition, as well as occurring frequently throughout the transcript. Because it is both frequent and non-salient, it is easy to overlook the omission of a single token of the word. However, this oversight arguably erases a bit of the cohesive poetic structure of this narrative, for it appears that the narrator uses *and* to demarcate the beginnings of discourse chunks (which Hymes terms 'verses').

Figures 1a–c vividly illustrate the difficulty of accurately reproducing a transcript in all its complexity, even within a single text. As already stated, in addition to the differences between Michaels's original transcript in Figure 1a and Hymes's representation of it in Figure 1b there are unaccounted-for differences even between Hymes's two representations of Michaels's transcript in Figures 1b and 1c. Moreover, both transcripts produced by Hymes differ significantly from Michaels's original in ways that do not seem to be deliberate.

To be sure, these changes do not for the most part significantly affect the analysis, but they certainly shape the sort of analysis that is possible; for example, Hymes includes only those prosodic details that he considers important to his interpretation of the narrative, but in omitting other details he makes it difficult for readers to challenge or revise his account. Yet Hymes himself often relies on details in others' transcripts to explore aspects of the data that the original researcher did not pursue. It is for this reason that conversation analysts are committed to transcribing in greater detail than is usually required by their analyses: the hope is that later readers and researchers will thereby discover new things in the data (e.g. ten Have, 2002). Thus the recommendation that transcribers only present the level of detail used in the analysis (e.g. O'Connell and Kowal, 2000), while enhancing readability and reproducibility, would increase the authority of the researcher's interpretation, particularly in the majority of cases in which the original recording is not publicly available.

Given the nature of the differences described above, most of the variability in Hymes's representation and reformatting of Michaels's data was probably introduced not by Hymes himself in the original manuscript but by a member of the publisher's production staff at a later stage in the publication process. However, critics of variability in transcripts would not necessarily consider this an adequate defense. Kitinger (1998), for example, argues that authors cannot shift the responsibility to typesetters and copy editors for errors in published transcripts; as she writes, it is not 'appropriate to blame copy editors or proofreaders for these sorts of errors: it is up to the analyst who claims analytic importance for fine detail to ensure that the necessary details are correctly quoted' (1998: 142). It is certainly true that an author must do all she can to ensure the accuracy of material published under her name, but it is likewise necessary

to acknowledge that the conditions under which scholarly publications are currently produced do not allow for complete authorial control. Many discourse analysts have had the experience of discovering, in the published version of their work, errors that were entered into transcripts during the production process or that remained uncorrected despite repeated requests to the production editor. It would therefore be rewarding to contemplate how, under the regime of academic publication to which all researchers must submit, our own texts become susceptible to precisely the same sorts of transformations that we perform through the work of transcription. While Kitzinger argues forcefully that such variation in discourse representation is unacceptable, she acknowledges that 'the existence of errors in quoting data transcripts is a normal routine part of the scholarly literature' (1998: 142). If this is indeed the case, then as students of the routine and everyday, discourse analysts will certainly benefit from trying to understand this situation and examining its consequences for the circulation of knowledge through publication at the present sociohistorical moment.

In the above example, most of the significant changes to the original transcript were apparently unintentional. I now turn to a situation in which the researcher's decision to alter a transcript is quite deliberate, yet again the decision yields unanticipated effects on the representation of the data. Example (2) is taken from an article by John W. Du Bois (2003) on the relationship between discourse and grammar.⁶ The example reproduces Du Bois's comments on the presentation of his data, along with an accompanying footnote. I have highlighted in italics the portion of the text that is of interest:

(2)

The data in this paper are drawn from naturally occurring conversations and other speech events in the Santa Barbara Corpus of Spoken American English (Du Bois, 2000). For reasons of space, most examples cited are very brief, usually just a line or two, without the larger discourse context. *In some cases the transcription has been slightly simplified for the sake of conciseness and accessibility.*⁴ . . . The published corpus (Du Bois, 2000) is available for consulting the larger discourse context and full transcription detail for many of these examples, if desired.

⁴The main simplification pertains to cited utterances in which the speaker's words overlap with another utterance, not included in the citation, by a second speaker. Had both utterances been cited, each would contain square brackets [] marking the point where overlap begins and ends. *But wherever only one of a pair of overlapping utterances is cited in the excerpt, all overlap notations are left out, to avoid confusion.* (Du Bois, 2003: 54)

What Du Bois describes is a very common practice among discourse analysts of all kinds in order to make their texts more reader-friendly by eliminating unnecessary clutter. Yet as researchers have repeatedly shown, what counts as unnecessary clutter in discourse cannot be determined in advance. In this case, Du Bois realized after the publication of the paper that overlap marking might be analytically important even when the second part of the overlap is not provided. As he notes, 'evaluative utterances appear to have a high correlation with overlap (which is obscured by the practice of omitting overlap brackets)' (Du Bois, personal communication, 8 May 2005). It is important to point out

that this correlation is not the focus of Du Bois's analysis and that in any case the original overlaps can be recovered by consulting the Santa Barbara Corpus (Du Bois et al., 2000). However, the omission of the overlap brackets eliminates information about a suggestive pattern that would no doubt be of interest to many readers and that is unavailable to them by other means (unless they have a lucky hunch that such a correlation may exist and then check the corpus to corroborate their guess). Once again variability in transcription, whether deliberate or unintended, alters and often limits the ways in which published data may be read and interpreted.

Orthographic variation

Like variation in the reproduction of published transcripts, the third type of variation that I consider has also attracted a great deal of attention from critical commentators on transcription practice: the question of the orthographic representation of pronunciation. This issue has attracted a lively debate that has largely played out along disciplinary lines, with linguistically trained scholars arguing that the use of non-standard spelling to represent vernacular pronunciation is unscientific and politically questionable (e.g. Preston, 1982, 1985), while those whose focus is on language as performance or social action respond that such spellings are both more accessible than formal phonetic representations and more descriptive than standard orthography (e.g. West, 1996), providing a representation of speech 'that will look to the eye how it sounds to the ear' (Schenkein, 1978: xi). I will not weigh in on this debate here, since I myself as well as other scholars have already discussed some of the merits and limitations of both perspectives (e.g. Bucholtz, 2000; Jaffe, 2000; Luebs, 1996). Instead, I take a somewhat maverick view, given that much of the criticism of the use of non-standard orthography comes from my own discipline of linguistics. Specifically, I argue from a linguistic standpoint that there is analytic value in transcription practices that call attention to pronunciation, however it is represented. At this stage my choice of the term *variation* at the beginning of this article may take on additional resonance, for what I want to suggest is that conversation analysts in particular, through their efforts to capture details of pronunciation in their transcripts, may help variationist sociolinguists to identify places in conversational data in which phonological variation occurs (see also Jefferson, 1983), if such information is noted systematically.

To illustrate this point, I examine transcripts of two well-known speakers in conversation analysis, Ava and Bee. The examples are taken from Schegloff (1996), but similar (and even identical) data can be found in many conversation-analytic transcripts.⁷ One of the unacknowledged (and unutilized) gifts that conversation analysis has given to variationist sociolinguistics is an abundance of conversational data illustrating one of the most widely discussed phenomena in the field, post-vocalic (r) vocalization or deletion, often called 'r-lessness', which is characteristic of many US dialects, including New York English, Boston English, Southern English, and African American English. A basic variationist

- ↑I don't know,=
 =I guess she's <creaky> {<[U]>}=-
 =she's all right.=
 =She went to the: u::h,
 hospital again today,
 Ava: Mhm.
 <click>
 Bee: (0.5) A:nd,
 I guess today was the day she's supposed to find out if she goes
 <quieter> {in: or <∅> not.}=
 Ava: =Oh.=
 =O:h.
 <click>
 Bee: Because they're <∅> gonna do the operation on the tear <∅> duct,
 f[i:rs]t.= <R>
 Ava: [Mhm.]
 Bee: =Before <∅> they can do th[e <quieter> {cataract }s.]
 Ava: [Right.
 Yeah.]

Based on my own hearing, although the transcript does indeed create the general 'flavor' of r-less speech, in its details it does not 'look to the eye how it sounds to the ear', or at least to my ear. Strikingly, where the original transcript implies that in this interaction only Bee uses the r-less variant, the first line of my own transcript indicates that Ava also consistently uses the r-less variant. But there may be an analytically interesting reason why the original transcript highlights only one of (what I hear as) Bee's four uses of the r-less variant (*or*, *they're*, *tear*, *before*) and does not note, as I do, Ava's three uses (*mother*, *your*, *grandmother*). According to my transcript, whereas Ava uses this variant only in unstressed syllables, Bee uses it in both stressed and unstressed syllables. Significantly, the one r-less variant that is noted in the original transcript occurs in a stressed syllable (*tear*), which Bee gives additional emphatic stress in her production of the utterance. Phonological variants that occur in stressed syllables are likely to be more perceptually salient to listeners. Thus in some sense, the original transcript does after all 'look to the eye how it sounds to the ear', insofar as Bee's stressed r-less variant in *tear* may be more noticeable than what I hear as Ava's three unstressed r-less variants.¹⁰ I do not necessarily advocate this line of reasoning, nor do I argue that my own hearing supersedes that of the original transcribers. Rather, I introduce both of these issues in order to make a point: different auditors may hear different things in the same recording, not only because of differences in the quality of the equipment used and the acoustics of the setting, but also because of differences in what counts as salient, depending on the listeners' own dialectal backgrounds and phonological expectations as well as the practices of 'professional hearing' into which they have been socialized (Ashmore et al., 2004; cf. Goodwin, 1994). Thus every time a recording is played it is recontextualized anew. Variation in transcription may therefore be in the first instance a matter of variation in perception, and hence one that is not easily resolved. But regardless of whether such differences in hearing can

be settled, what is interactionally salient to participants is what they hear, not what analysts are able to detect. This example reveals both the value of attending systematically to phonological detail and the analytic challenge of hearing speakers in the same way their interlocutors do.

If conversation analysis offers a treasure trove of data for the investigation of sociolinguistic variables, by the same token variationist sociolinguistics may provide conversation analysts with additional resources for the analysis of the sequential organization of talk, by providing tools for the analysis of phonological variation as a phenomenon of potential significance in moment-to-moment interaction. As transcribed, Example (4a) may suggest an interactional dimension to a phenomenon Labov (1972) first observed in his renowned study of (r) pronunciation by employees in New York department stores. By purporting to be a customer making an inquiry about the location of a particular type of merchandise, Labov was able to elicit pronunciations of the target phrase *fourth floor* as either r-less or r-ful; one factor influencing which pronunciation was produced was the sequential position of the phrase *fourth floor* in the interaction between Labov and the store employee. When *fourth floor* was produced in response to Labov's first inquiry as a customer, it was relatively more likely to have at least some r-less pronunciation; when it was produced as a confirmation in so-called careful style, following Labov's feigned inability to hear the first response, it was relatively more likely to have an r-ful pronunciation. The transcript in Example (4) suggests that this pattern carries over even when the confirmation is supplied by another speaker, so that while Ava is represented as producing an r-less token, *pahking place*, Bee, confirming what Ava has said, is represented as producing an r-ful token, *parking place*.

(4)

Ava: [<I wan]'dih know if yih got a-uh:m
wutchimicawllit. A:: pah(hh)khing place 'th's mornin'. 'hh
Bee: A pa:rk^hing place,
Ava: Mm hm,
(0.4)

(Schegloff, 1996: 66)

This recording is also available online;¹¹ in my hearing, the second token of *parking* is indeed relatively more rhotic than the first, though not dramatically so. But regardless of whether this particular example offers interactional evidence for the use of an r-ful pronunciation in careful speech, there is clearly a promising possibility for new research directions if phonological information were documented systematically in conversation-analytic transcripts. The fact that both conversation analysis and variationist sociolinguistics pay special attention to the details of phonology should be viewed as potential common ground and not a site of contention, despite their very different methods and goals.

One of my own goals as a researcher is to bring interactional methods to bear on variationist questions and vice versa, as part of a broader project to advocate an interdisciplinary coalition of approaches to language, culture, and society

(e.g. Bucholtz and Hall, 2005). Thus, sociolinguistic research on style (e.g. Bucholtz, 1999a, 1999b; Coupland, 1980, 1985; Eckert and Rickford, 2001; Kiesling, 2004; Schilling-Estes, 2004) has shown how the choice of sociolinguistic variables may play an interactional role in discourse, while John Kelly and John K. Local's (1989) phonetic work on the variable pronunciation of *well* in conversation and Jefferson's (1978) study of lax tokens of *no*, such as *nyem*, make related points from a conversation-analytic perspective. In fact, Jefferson, who developed the transcription system widely used by conversation analysts and other discourse analysts, has a strong analytic commitment to capturing 'pronunciational particulars' (1983, 2004). Her observations on the value of including such details in transcripts are in keeping with fundamental phonological principles regarding the phonetically conditioned distribution of allophones. For example, in her comments on her transcription of the Watergate tapes, she notes regarding John Dean's pronunciation of *to*:

We can at least note that the 'correct' pronunciation, "to", coincides with a stress on that word, while the two 'incorrect' pronunciations, "tuh" and "dih" occur at points where the word is not being stressed. Also, we can at least account for the occurrence of the 'd'-begun "dih", as conditioned by the preceding 'd'-ended word, "turned". Who knows what other orderlinesses will emerge as attention is given to such details? (2004: 22)

Although the language in which Jefferson characterizes this patterning may seem technically imprecise to scholars trained in phonology, this should not overshadow the fact that her basic observations are phonologically sound (if rather unsurprising to most linguists). A natural next step (and one that some scholars have already taken) would be interdisciplinary collaboration between phonologists beginning to examine connected discourse in real-world contexts and conversation analysts interested in the role of pronunciation in interaction.

Thus regardless of how such details are noted in research transcripts, increased attention to the relationship between phonology and interaction has the potential to enrich a number of fields. As Jefferson remarks, 'we are either committed to transcribing all the talk in its pronunciational particulars, or to accepting the obliteration of a potentially fruitful data base' (1983: 12, quoted in Luebs, 1996: 276). Although discourse analysts (including most conversation analysts) may find the former approach to be too time-intensive to be realistic in every case, the inclusion of such information is likely to yield insights for analysts from a variety of perspectives and thus to further the broad interdisciplinary study of language, culture, and society.

Variation in translation

The previous examples have demonstrated how choices in representation facilitate or foreclose different analytic possibilities. These examples have also offered some indications that certain choices may be connected with the transcriber's professional or disciplinary identity: for example, as a sociolinguist or a

conversation analyst. I now turn to more political dimensions of representation: how the choices that researchers make represent not only their own identities but also those of the speakers whose talk they transcribe.

To briefly illustrate this final issue, Example (5) is taken from Michael Moerman's (1988) research on Thai interaction, which combines ethnographic and conversation-analytic methodologies. The interaction in the example involves a lawyer (L) questioning a witness (W). One significant challenge in translation for transcription is the unhappy choice between a colloquial translation style, which may imply that the speakers are 'just like us', despite significant cultural and other differences, and a formal translation style, which may position the speakers as 'not like us at all', but rather as foreign, stiff, and old-fashioned (see also Bucholtz, 1995). In addition, such translation choices may signal the transcriber's understanding of the speaker's social status and hence appropriate speech style, regardless of what the speaker actually says. These issues arise in Example (5) in Moerman's translation of the word *lǎ·j*.

(5)

6 L phà·n bâ·n khraj máj
 pass house who instance
 Whose houses did you pass

7 W phà·n lǎ·j bâ·n kháp
 pass many houses PRT
 I passed a lot of houses

[...]

12 L ... phà·n lǎ·j bâ·n ná
 pass many house Qprt
 ... You passed many houses?

(Moerman, 1988: 149–50)

In line 7 the witness says, 'I passed a lot of houses.' Here Moerman translates *lǎ·j* as 'a lot of'. In line 12, the lawyer asks the witness a confirming question, 'You passed many houses?' which shows a high degree of lexical and syntactic resonance with the witness's statement. However, here Moerman translates *lǎ·j* as 'many'. This variation in the translation of *lǎ·j* is not arbitrary: the lawyer's speech is translated into a formal style, while the witness's speech is translated into a colloquial style. Hence translation styles may map onto social statuses rather than onto the actual linguistic forms speakers use. Researchers have found a similar phenomenon among American court reporters (e.g. Walker, 1990). In this way the process of discourse transcription is also a process of social ascription, one that represents different kinds of speakers in differential ways (see also Mondada, 2002).

Moerman is not unaware of such issues, and he has sensitively discussed the challenges of the transcription and translation of interaction in a language the researcher does not speak natively (Moerman, 1996). In recognition of the difficulties of such research, he recorded his original transcription sessions with his native-speaker research assistant and has made them publicly available for further study – a practice that would be valuable for many researchers involved

in collaborative transcription and translation. The issue, then, is not that scholars whose transcripts reveal variability are careless or unthinking, but that both interaction and transcription are heavily laden with social, cultural, and political meanings, and hence to recontextualize one as the other inevitably leads to what Briggs and Bauman (1992) call an 'intertextual gap'.

Conclusion

In this article I have sketched four types of variation in discourse transcription, but there are certainly many more. Each of these types of variation – variation in the global representation of speech and interaction due to analytic focus, variation in the fine-grained details of notation in reproducing one's own or others' transcripts, orthographic variation within the same transcript, and variation in translation – emerges from the different reasons that scholars create and publish transcripts and the different uses to which they put them. The entextualization of talk via transcription is only one of the many contextual transformations that discourse undergoes as it moves from spoken interaction to published text, and there is no reason to expect or demand that it must remain unchanged throughout this process of recontextualization.

My goal in this article is therefore not to contribute to the tradition of lament in critiques of transcription, but to suggest that variability in transcription practice has analytic, social, and political meanings that we would do well as researchers to examine more closely. Discourse analysts must recognize and understand differences in the transcribed representation of the 'same' discursive material in the first instance as variation, and hence worthy of our analytic attention, rather than simply deplore such differences as inconsistencies or errors. Thinking reflexively about entextualization, about what exactly it is that we do when we transform others' words from spoken to written form, is an important but underappreciated part of our task as researchers. And acknowledging the central role of linguistic representation in this process – the power we wield to portray and circulate speech and speakers as entextualized entities – compels us to think more carefully about transcription as an inherently and unavoidably sociopolitical act.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Earlier versions of this article were presented to the symposium 'Transcribing Now: Means and Meanings in the Representation of Spoken Discourse' at the University of California, Santa Barbara in May 2005, to the Language, Interaction, and Social Organization Research Focus Group at UC Santa Barbara in April 2003, and to the Urban Sociolinguistics Group at New York University in November 2000. My thanks to audience members for their feedback and to scholars at the 'Transcribing Now' symposium who generously tolerated my recontextualization of their transcripts. Special thanks to Jack Du Bois for his extremely valuable insights and suggestions and to Christy Bird, Roberta Bloom, and Jung-Eun Janie Lee for technical and editorial assistance. Any remaining weaknesses are my own responsibility.

NOTES

1. This example also invites the question of variation between analytic transcripts, which researchers develop for private use, and the presentation transcripts that scholars include in talks and articles, a question that I raise here but do not pursue further in this article.
2. Parker (1997) offers a critique of Hymes's focus on poetic structure in his transcription of Native American narratives, arguing that such transcripts participate in a colonial politics of representation and appropriation.
3. Hymes's own interpretation differs somewhat from mine; he writes, 'High accented syllables . . . appear to be structurally important. They are marked by Michaels by a bold acute accent over the vowel, as distinct from high rise, marked by an acute accent that is not bold' (1996: 183, n. 7). I instead understand the symbol for a high accented syllable to be a vertical hash mark on the upper part of the line (') and a high rise to be marked with a preceding apostrophe, based on Michaels's footnote 2 (1983: 31). What Hymes here refers to as a high accented syllable appears to be what Michaels terms a high fall tonal nucleus.
4. For example, the high rise tonal nucleus, marked with an apostrophe in Michaels's transcript, seems to have been omitted because Hymes does not consider it to play a role in the discourse structure. By contrast, he includes the low rise tonal nucleus and comments on this fact in his discussion of transcription: 'I indicate low rise, because it appears to be structurally important in this text . . .' (1996: 183, n. 7).
5. The notational function of parentheses is not provided in Michaels's transcription key. Gumperz and Berenz (1993) use this notation to indicate unintelligible speech.
6. I am indebted to Du Bois for supplying me with this example from his own work.
7. The transcripts used here were created collaboratively by Rich Frankel, Gail Jefferson, and Emanuel Schegloff; Schegloff reports that he did the initial 'rough' transcript and that subsequently 'Rich, Gail and I (re-)transcribed it separately and then met to "reconcile" the versions, and preserve alternative hearings when none emerged as definitive' (Schegloff, personal communication, 8 August 2006).
8. As a transcriptional aside, even if the IPA is not used to capture facts about pronunciation, we might also consider the possibility that for these speakers, or others with non-rhotic dialects, their ordinary pronunciation is largely r-less, and hence that the use of (r) and not its absence is what should be orthographically marked, for example through the use of double *r* to indicate r-fulness. Gail Jefferson, who transcribed many of the materials most widely used by conversation analysts, has also pointed out the necessity of indicating when a standard spelling reflects a standard pronunciation. She has introduced a notational symbol, the diaeresis (¨), to deal with this situation. She explains: 'The diaeresis does an additional job in transcripts where I'm using non-standard orthography. Many words get a range of oddball spellings, in keeping with the range of pronunciations they are subject to. On occasion such a word appears in its standard spelling. If that word carries a diaeresis, this means that while such a spelling could be the result of a lapse of transcriber concentration, in this case it does indicate the way the word was pronounced' (2002: 1381).
9. The URL for the sound file is: [http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/soc/faculty/schegloff/RealSoundFiles/Turn_Organization/03_page_61.ram]. It is important to note that this sort of comparison is only possible because of the CA ethos of sharing data and making one's audio recordings available to others whenever possible.

10. Slightly complicating such an account is my hearing of the r-less variant in Bee's utterance of *before*, where the host syllable is again stressed, though not so heavily as *tear*.
11. The URL for the sound file is: [http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/soc/faculty/schegloff/RealSoundFiles/Turn_Organization/06a_page_66.ram].

APPENDIX: TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS

The following conventions are used for examples transcribed by the author. Each line represents a single intonation unit.

.	end of intonation unit; falling intonation
,	end of intonation unit; fall-rise intonation
?	end of intonation unit; rising intonation
!	raised pitch throughout the intonation unit
↑	pitch accent
<u>underline</u>	emphatic stress; increased amplitude; careful articulation of a segment
:	length
=	latching; no pause between intonation units
–	self-interruption; break in the intonation unit
-	self-interruption; break in the word, sound abruptly cut off
(.)	pause of 0.5 seconds or less
(1.1)	measured pause of greater than 0.5 seconds
@	laughter; each token marks one pulse
n@	nasal laughter
[]	overlapping speech
[[]]	overlapping speech in proximity to a previous overlap
()	uncertain transcription
< >	transcriber comment; non-vocal noise
{ }	stretch of talk to which transcriber comment applies
< [] >	phonetic transcription

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