

Question 2.

State your central research question, then describe, justify, and situate the research methods that you propose to use in finding answers to this question with regard to existing methodological models in linguistic anthropology and related disciplines.

2.1 My central research question

The central question that I seek to answer in my dissertation research is: How do Nanti *karintaa* performances – understood as a distinct WAY OF SPEAKING within a BOUNDED COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE – INTERACT, INTERRELATE, and CONTRAST with other instances of Nanti discourse as CONSTITUENTS of a SYSTEM of DISCOURSE, or *discursive ecology*?

In subsequent sections, I will discuss three faces of the methodology I will use to answer this (and related) questions: methods for designing my research project; methods for gathering my data; and methods for analyzing my data.

2.2 Primary disciplinary frameworks

This central question, together with the large set of more specific questions to which it gives rise,¹ is framed by a discourse-centered approach to culture, which posits that discourse is the richest point of intersection between human culture, society, and individuality; moreover, it posits that naturally-occurring discourse is one of the richest resources available (to the social scientist observer and local participant alike) for understanding human social behavior and experience. Based on this view, I posit that examining Nanti *karintaa* PERFORMANCES_A in relation with other forms and instances of Nanti discourse will provide insight into the discursive ecology as one of the most important organizing principles of contemporary Nanti social life.

The discourse-centered approach to my research questions brings with it two fundamental methods for designing my research project: first, to gather naturally-occurring discourse data; and second, to analyze that data for what it reveals about the other domains of human activity to which it is linked. While these two fundamental methods require much elaboration and specification on my part, they are the bedrock on which my analytical perspective is built.

At the same time, I take a PRACTICE-centered approach to discourse and society; therefore, this research project takes as given that SOCIAL and CULTURAL PHENOMENA do not exist of themselves, but rather that they are enacted by a particular group in a particular place and time; and furthermore, that PATTERNS and STRUCTURES EMERGE in social behavior as a result of the SITUATED STRATEGIES that individual actors deploy in social interactions using resources that their unique set of experiences provide.

The practice-centered approach to my research questions brings me the third fundamental method I have used in designing my research project: to prioritize gathering and analyzing my data across time, thereby taking up, from the outset, the challenge of understanding CHANGE as well as CONTINUITY in Nanti discourse practices.

Below, I will first state my concrete research objectives, after which I will discuss in detail my methodology for meeting these objectives.

2.3 Research objectives and data sets

My dissertation research has two related but distinct overall goals, the second goal, however, is contingent upon accomplishing the first. The first goal is comprehensive description; the second is THEORY_n-driven analysis.

¹ An interesting subset of these questions I appended to my dissertation prospectus.

My concrete research objectives are:

1. first, to thoroughly DESCRIBE contemporary Nanti *karintaa* PERFORMANCES_A;
2. second, to characterize *karintaa* as a distinct Nanti WAY OF SPEAKING in contrast with coexisting social and discursive practices;
3. and third, to generate a description of the relationships – that is, the observable samenesses and differences in form, content, and function – among *karintaa* and non-*karintaa* ways of speaking,
4. which, in turn, will generate a description of a Nanti *discursive ecology*;
5. and will provide evidence for my assertion that this *discursive ecology* is one of the primary organizing systems in Nanti society;
6. and which in turn will support the generalization that understanding the discursive ecology of a human social group can substantially contribute to broader understandings of how human social groups are formed, maintained, organized, and/or dissolved.

To meet the objectives outlined above, I will record, transcribe, and analyze a large corpus of naturally-occurring *karintaa* data and naturally-occurring non-*karintaa* discourse data. In collecting non-*karintaa* data, I will primarily draw on daily conversational discourse, but I will also attend to other MARKED Nanti ways of speaking including leader-talk, scolding-talk, and feast banter. Principled, systematic comparison both between specific data (TOKENS) and among sets of data (TYPES) across various schemes of organization will be crucial to reaching my analytical goals. However, the primary axis of comparison will be between *karintaa* and non-*karintaa* discourse.

My two primary data sets will be: (1) EXTEMPORANEOUS *karintaa* performances recorded during feasting in Montetoni and Marankehari; and (2) (extemporaneous) non-*karintaa* interactional data recorded between and among Nantis and between myself and Nantis. These new data will expand the corpus of *karintaa* and interactional data that I have gathered since 1997 and which forms the basis for the preliminary analyses that motivate this project.

The two analytical imperatives that will guide my research are DESCRIBE and COMPARE. Therefore, in sections 2.5 and 2.6 I will address how I plan to OPERATIONALIZE these two imperatives. After that discussion I will proceed to a detailed discussion of my methods for gathering and analyzing my data.

2.4 *A grounded theory approach*

It is worth mentioning at the outset that I plan to proceed with gathering and analyzing my data according to some of the central tenets of the GROUNDED THEORY approach (Bernard 2002; Glaser & Strauss 1967; Strauss & Corbin 1990). Crucially, this approach is analytically ITERATIVE, meaning that the researcher gathers data, identifies relevant properties, categories, and concepts extant in that data, then proceeds to gather more data in order to learn more about those properties, categories, and concepts. The ideal outcome of this approach is to generate a specific THEORY_{n+1} that is firmly grounded in and supported by the researcher/theorist's own data collection.

What most appeals to me about this approach is that data, analysis, and theory are continuously interacting with each other during the entire research process, assuring that each of these makes sense in light of the others. Too often, I find that theories of social organization and empirical data – or, on the other hand, analyses of data on LANGUAGE₁-in-use (that is,

LANGUAGE₂) and a clearly articulated THEORY₁ of what is generalizable from that data – remain too far removed from one another, such that one gets the sense that data has been ‘tacked on’ to THEORY₁ or THEORY₁ has been ‘tacked on’ to data at the last minute. The iterative method of the grounded theory approach should help me avoid this common problem from the outset.

Further, if by using an iterative, grounded approach I discover that the hypotheses and theories which I brought to my field research are incorrect, I expect that in their place, I will instead discover answers to my question and theoretical formulations that are correct. Finally, I find the grounded theory approach a particularly appealing method for research that is concerned with change over time in a data set, since the iterative nature of the approach itself brings the axis of time to the center of the research process.

2.5 *Feature-based formal description*

Human communicative behavior – and *karintaa* no less so – is of course an immensely COMPLEX PHENOMENON₂. There is no way one researcher can capture “everything” that is embedded in a data segment; and, as I will discuss later, especially in section 2.9.4 on transcription, capturing “everything” is not really the point. The point is for the researcher to be able to select, in a SYSTEMATIC and PRINCIPLED manner, from mass of data, that which is relevant to the specific research questions under investigation.

As I mentioned earlier, in looking at my data on Nanti communicative practices, one of my main goals is to DESCRIBE these practices thoroughly. Thorough description will then facilitate SYSTEMATIC COMPARISON among these practices, which in turn will address my central research questions. But how to describe? I have reached the conclusion that my descriptions, in order to be relevant to one another as members of a data set, in a fundamental sense must be comparative as well. That is, the PRIMITIVE elements of communicative practices that I identify are only primitive elements in contrast with other elements of the same order. This is a basic lesson of phonology, but I feel it is highly appropriate to other systems of humanly organized sound. This approach is also, in a certain sense, naturally a ‘grounded’ approach, in as much as the researcher studying contrastive features of a PHENOMENON₂ can only discover the contrastiveness of those features through active, ITERATIVE comparison of data.

In describing Nanti discourse data, I intend to rely heavily on identifying its FEATURES – both its FORMAL features and features of its CONTENT (see further discussion in sections 2.9 and 2.10) – such that these can be compared and contrasted. I think it is crucial in analyzing discourse data that one carefully separate form from content, and form from FUNCTION₂, as a part of the analytical process (I also think it is crucial to put this back together again afterward!)

As I discussed in section 1.11, a number of principles that I have learned as linguistic THEORY₁ are fundamental to my analysis of Nanti communicative practice. Adding another level of specificity here, I fully expect that among the salient features I describe in my data will be solidly ‘linguistic’ features, including phonological, morphological, clausal, and syntactic phenomena that have functional roles in multiple levels of the organization of Nanti discourse.

2.6 *Comparative analysis*

Dependent upon the process of identifying and categorizing the features of Nanti communicative practice is the process of identifying the SALIENT RELATIONSHIPS, CONTRASTS, and CONTINUITIES among these practices themselves. Although these two processes are similar in kind and method, the latter process takes place at a much higher level of complexity, because so much variation in features is possible between any set of tokens of discourse. Nonetheless, systematic and

principled comparison is still the most appropriate approach to use. Not only can comparison reveal salient contrasts between what is present across data, but it is perhaps the only way that absences can be revealed, by virtue of their contrast with presences. This aspect of using systematic comparison is particularly important in describing the contrasts between *karintaa* POETRY and EVERYDAY Nanti INTERACTIONS; for example, it was only by identifying the recurrent presence of certain phenomena in the former that I was able to identify the recurrent absence of these phenomena in the latter domain.

2.7 *Axes of comparison in my own data set*

As I mentioned earlier, my primary axis for comparison across types of communicative practice among Nantis will be *karintaa* versus non-*karintaa* interactions. However, the set of non-*karintaa* interactions is a wildly diverse set of interactions whose only necessary commonality, at first glance, is not being *karintaa*. Therefore, it is essential that I characterize some other identifiable TYPES of interactions within this primary set and discuss the ways in which I plan to analyze these.

I will call those interactions that take place outside feasting (both temporally and spatially), that are the most interactive, least marked, most locally organized, and that have the fewest identifiable formal features EVERYDAY INTERACTIONS. I will call those components of verbal interactions that have recognizable sets of marked formal features SPEAKING STYLES. For example, among the speaking styles I have thus far identified in Nanti discourse is scolding-talk, in which the pitch, tempo, and loudness of speaking all increase and accompany words of caution, disapproval, or correction to someone, usually a child. I will call those speaking styles that are typically restricted to certain social, temporal, and/or spatial situations GENRES, in addition to the genre of *karintaa*, I have identified the genre of hunting storytelling, in which a man or group of men produce a narrative of a personal hunting experience for a group listeners while seated close to one another, usually in the cooking hut of one of the storytellers at eveningtime.

A defining feature of a speaking style that differentiates it from a genre is its ‘portability’ across types and settings of interactions; as such, it is always necessarily a FIGURE against a discursive GROUND. In addition to extracting instances of speaking styles from everyday interactions in order to thoroughly describe them, I will also prioritize describing the ways in which these styles (and distinctive features of them) constitute a resource that speakers either use or INDEX in everyday interactions.

Note that none of these definitions assumes that their constitutive features are confined to one type of interaction or another; in fact the opposite assumption – that these features are salient within interactions because they most frequently constitute a particular type of interaction – is fundamental to the notion of discursive ecology.

2.8 *Equipment and techniques for gathering data*

My primary base of operations for my research project will be the community of Montetoni; as is perhaps obvious, Montetoni has no source of electricity. Upon first arriving in Montetoni, I will set up a 32-watt solar panel and 2-12 volt batteries as my power source.

My primary tool for data management and analysis, transcription, and writing will be my Apple iBook laptop computer and peripheral equipment. My iBook is equipped with a CD burner, with which I will back up my data, transcripts, analyses and other documents. Peripherals will include an extra battery, an external hard drive and an external USB drive. For linguistic

analysis, I will primarily use Shoebox 5.0; for sound analysis, I will primarily use Praat; for digital data management, I will use Atlas ti.

Due to various personal experiences with the extreme difficulties presented by the environment in which I will be carrying out this project, I have developed an extremely cautious attitude towards protecting my data and equipment. I will keep my audio recording equipment, my video recording equipment, my original data, my back-up copies of my data, my laptop, and my external drives in (at least) six separate watertight, airtight Dorskocil cases.

2.8.1 Gathering audio data

I will gather *karintaa* data using the recording methodology that I have developed over the years that I have been documenting Nanti feasting. Feast participants, including myself at times, wear an IRU, or Individual Recording Unit: the feaster is fitted with a small waistpack containing a minidisc recorder and a stereo lavalier microphone is clipped to the feaster's clothing. The IRUs I have used previously consist of a Sony MZ-R37 MiniDisc Recorder, a Sony ECM-717 Stereo Lavalier Microphone and a 74 minute Sony MiniDisc recording in mono mode, which allows 148 continuous minutes of recording. Within the parameters of feasting, the long uninterrupted recording time is a tremendous benefit and the mono mode is of ample sound quality. For this research project, I will build several more IRUs (using Sony minidisc recorders, mics, and minidisks) in order to be able to record multiple individuals at the same time.

The IRU's key advantages are these: first, the recorder goes wherever the feaster goes, and records whatever the feaster says, chants, and hears; second, the equipment is visible so everyone knows at a glance that they are being recorded; and third, the microphone mounted on the feaster selects his or her voice and the voices of those in the immediate vicinity out of the tumultuous sound of many people chanting simultaneously, thus providing clear recordings of monophonic and polyphonic *karintaa*. (Goodwin 1993, Bernard 2002) The microphone may easily be switched off at any time that the wearer chooses to stop recording.

The single disadvantage to the IRU is that because the lavalier microphone is nearest to the mouth of the wearer, sometimes the recordings of the other individuals with whom the IRU wearer is interacting are difficult to hear and transcribe. For this reason, I intend to use several IRUs at a time during feasts so that when two (or more) IRU wearers interact I will have excellent recordings from both (or all) of them.

I will gather non-*karintaa* discourse data using this same IRU technique, but more often I will wear the IRU. Outside of the complex soundscape of feasting, and during non-feast conversational interactions, a single IRU makes excellent recordings of all participants. In addition, I will use minidisc recorders and stationary microphones to record interactions that take place in stationary social spaces.

2.8.2 Gathering video data

I will supplement my audio data with video recordings in order to document the visual, spatial, and gestural aspects of Nanti interactions. I will record video data using my Sony DCR-TRV120 Digital-8 camera and accessories. My video recording will be primarily take place in common spaces of the village during feasting; it will occasionally include conversations and interviews with Nanti individuals from whom I have acquired prior informed consent. Over the years since I first brought a video camera to Montetoni, I have learned the times and places in which Nantis seem comfortable or seem uncomfortable with the presence of a camera. Because people that I have videotaped have seen my recordings and have discussed with me the uses to which I have

or will put these recordings, most of the residents of Montetoni and Marankehari have an informed opinion regarding when video recording is appropriate. The opinions that they have and will express to me will always guide my decisions to video record or not.

2.8.3 *Backing up original data gathered in the field*

While in the field, I will back up all my audio data on CDs and minidisks and permanently archive the original audio recordings in a dedicated airtight case. Due to practical limitations on space and battery power, I will selectively import segments of my video data into iMovie for back-up and analysis; I will also store all the original video recordings in an airtight case. Once I return to UT, I will back up all of my video data on Digital-8 or VHS cassettes and permanently archive the original recordings.

2.9 *Transcription*

2.9.1 *Transcription as a structured collaborative activity*

While in the field, I will selectively transcribe SALIENT segments and review these segments with Nanti consultants for the purposes of CONTEXTUALIZATION₂ and TRANSLATION into Spanish and English. These consultation sessions themselves will be recorded and reviewed with consultants to maximize multi-leveled INTERSUBJECTIVE UNDERSTANDING of the original material (Bucholtz 2000; Duranti 1997; Graham 1995; Ochs 1979).

The conventions and strategies I use in my transcriptions are informed by many examples – both good and bad, but all instructive – of data found in a wide range of sources. The models most influential for the way I transcribe conversation and other verbal forms of interaction come from the work of Elinor Ochs (eg. 1979, 2001) whose work in turn reflects the pioneering work in transcription conventionalization of Gail Jefferson; for transcribing talk and other forms of interaction taken from video data, from Charles Goodwin (eg. 1994, 1996); and for transcribing the interface between musical forms and other forms of human expression, from Steven Feld (1990 [1982]) and Anthony Seeger (1987). A general set of principles that will guide my transcription strategies are addressed in *Talking Data* (Edwards & Lampert 1993). I wish to emphasize that these models guide me in deciding *which* features to transcribe or not transcribe as much as – or in some cases more than – they guide me in *how* to transcribe these features.

2.9.2 *Transcription as a tool for intersubjectivity*

In my view, transcription forms the cornerstone in building INTERSUBJECTIVITY with other scholars on my empirical research on Nanti interactional behavior. In my analysis of Nanti interactional data, the explicit purpose of the transcripts I create is to draw attention to specific features and patterns within chosen segments or strips of the multi-modal interactional data that I have recorded in audio and/or video media. In analyzing the discursive practices “used by members of a profession to shape events in the domains subject to their professional scrutiny” ((Goodwin, 1994): 606) Charles Goodwin reflects on his own professional practice and articulates the role that analytical representations can play in fostering intersubjectivity among researchers:

“Graphic representations, including transcripts of talk, diagrams, and frame grabs of scenes recorded on videotape, are annotated and highlighted in order to make salient specific events within them. Such highlighting guides the reader to see within a complex

perceptual field just those events that I find relevant to the points I am developing.”
(Goodwin 1994: 607)

Goodwin and many other students of human behavior have explicitly addressed the INHERENTLY POSITIONED nature of the transcript, pointing out that any transcription necessarily selects and represents some information and omits other information. The EVALUATIVE stances these scholars take regarding this issue vary widely, ranging from calling into question the validity of the basic notion of scientific study of human behavior to exhorting practitioners to transcribe with greater THEORETICAL₁ and POLITICAL responsibility and methodological RIGOR. In my view, researchers must first explicitly acknowledge and characterize the inherently positioned nature of their transcript; and thereafter make use of its selectivity and positionality as an analytical tool, rather than view this selectivity and positionality as obstacles to analytical precision.

2.9.3 *Inherent properties of the transcript*

Elinor Ochs was among the first anthropologists to articulate the perspective of ‘transcription as theory’ and to propose novel ways in which the activity of transcription could be pursued and improved as a result of this perspective. Observing that “[w]hat is on a transcript will influence and constrain what generalizations emerge” (Ochs 1979: 45) Ochs argues for highly detailed yet selective transcripts whose design is motivated by the researcher’s theoretical and analytical interests. Ochs’ most important insight, in my view, is that the inherent selectivity of transcription is its greatest strength as an analytical tool (in addition to one of its greatest limitations).

Just as the transcript is an inherently theoretical, Mary Bucholtz (2000) draws our attention its INHERENTLY POLITICAL nature, pointing out the interpersonal, social, and even legal consequences in the transcription decisions that researchers make. While, in my view, Bucholtz’ tone is more critical than constructive, her point that the researcher must be highly cognizant of the political ramifications of transcription decisions is a crucially important one. When taken together with Ochs’ insight regarding the utility of selectivity in creating transcripts, the researcher can then make transcription decisions that are sensitive and responsive to political issues – including, for example, the possible decision not to transcribe highly sensitive material at all.

In discussing the transcript as both an inherently theoretical and an inherently political artifact of research, it is worth mentioning that I (and many other researchers) likewise consider the video and audio data we gather to be inherently theoretical and political for similar reasons. That is, who, where, and when I gather data is the result of circumstances, choices, and decisions made by situated individuals, including but not limited to me as researcher. At the most obvious level, for example, the data I gather is oriented toward answering particular questions about Nanti interactional behavior and not oriented toward answering other (equally valid) questions. In addition, which Nanti individuals agree (or refuse) to be recorded at any particular moment is the result of complex circumstances and decisions to which I may not even have access.

The goal I see, then – having decided that the study of human interactions is in itself inherently valuable and worth doing – is to gather, select, transcribe, and analyze data on Nanti interactions fully cognizant of its situatedness and positionality and to make sure that my work is as FAITHFUL as possible to the theoretical and political themes it touches. It seems to me that always evaluating my transcripts and other analyses as though a Nanti person – in particular, one who is represented there in the writing – is reading over my shoulder provides an excellent

antidote to overly ETIC or irresponsible writing. In a similar spirit, Steven Feld set an admirable example for other ethnographers through his decision to discuss, reevaluate, and critique his book *Sound and Sentiment* with Kalulis after its publication, an experience that he discusses at length in a post-script to the second edition of that same book, published in 1990.

2.9.4 *The transcripts themselves*

I take as a necessary entailment of the inherent selectivity of the transcription process that a single transcript of a strip of interaction will pursue certain, but not all, of the researcher's analytical goals, and as such, several different transcriptions of a single interaction may in fact be necessary to address different phenomena found in the data. In my own work on *karintaa*, I have already found it useful to create separate transcripts of metrical and tonic characteristics, of poetic characteristics, and of referential material and possible translations into English and/or Spanish. The latter type of transcription further splits into transcriptions whose phonetic conventions are geared to either an English-speaking and -reading audience, or a Spanish-speaking and -reading audience. (A simple example is the spelling of the name of one of the Nanti villages: *Marankehari* for English-readers and *Marankejari* for Spanish-readers.) Creating multiple transcripts is made all the more necessary by the use of video data and audio data together. The multi-modal information that I can render SALIENT using frame grabs and other visual transcription techniques will be of crucial importance at times, but at other times, this type of information will not be the focus of my analysis. At the same time, the multiple transcripts that I create of single stretches of interaction have interactive AFFORDANCES when used together or 'layered' sequentially while building an argument, as Charles Goodwin's work effectively demonstrates ((Goodwin 1993), Goodwin 1994)).

2.10 *Coding of transcripts*

In order to meet my goal of describing the social, linguistic, poetic, musical, and semantic features that define *karintaa*, I will code every transcript for features that I know to be SALIENT because they either CO-OCCUR or ALTERNATE within and across Nanti utterances. The codes themselves will primarily be mnemonic codes that I create, based on features that my data demonstrate. The coding system I plan to use will be INDEXICAL, CORRELATIVE, and QUANTITATIVE (Bernard 2002). Sequentially, I will first code my transcripts to INDEX key features; in the first phase of my research, I will revise my coding scheme and recode my transcripts as necessary. When I am satisfied with the completeness and accuracy of my coding scheme, I will examine these codes for patterned correlations among them; subsequently, as appropriate, I will quantify the occurrences and co-occurrences of features to test the generalizability of my analyses.

I will code every transcript for key interactional features, including participants' identities (anonymized as necessary); participants' relative social positions; participants' roles in the interaction; spatial arrangements among participants; gaze, eye contact, and physical contact among participants; and relevant changes in these across specific strips of data.

I will code *karintaa* transcripts first for formal features of *karintaa*, including phonological and syntactic features; tonic and rhythmic structures; prosodic features; and repetition and parallelism. Then I will code these transcripts for semantico-referential features, including historical references; semantic indices of evaluative and affective stance; and the interactional features mentioned next.

I will code non-*karintaa* transcripts first for interactional features, including turn-taking

mechanisms, overlaps, interruptions, simultaneous talk, adjacency pairs, adjacent placement, next positioning, and aligning actions, including repair. Then I will code these transcripts for semantico-referential features, including historical references; semantic indices of evaluative and AFFECTIVE stance; and the formal features listed above as they appear.

2.11 *Analyzing coded transcripts*

I have identified *karintaa* as a highly MARKED GENRE because so many of the features which occur in this genre only occur there; at the same time, it is because the set of features that co-occur in this genre is both large and unique that I have identified it as a genre in the first place. If indeed *karintaa* is a distinct Nanti *way of speaking*, then empirically I will find co-occurrences of content and form that are in complementary, or mutually exclusive, distribution between *karintaa* and non-*karintaa* data.

At the same time, I do not posit that the sets of features of *karintaa* and non-*karintaa* interactions are entirely in complementary distribution; rather, these features are resources available for individuals to draw on in their communicative actions. Therefore, I will seek other patterns of co-occurrence among these features both inside and outside of *karintaa* performances to clarify which features, if any, are in fact restricted to a single genre such as *karintaa*.

Further, if indeed Nanti WAYS OF SPEAKING together CONSTITUTE a DISCURSIVE ECOLOGY, my coded transcripts will reveal patterned correlations among specific ways of speaking, specific social configurations, and specific forms of social action. In discussing the notion of communicative ecology in my master's thesis, I foregrounded the differences between communicative practices at different "levels of social organization" (Beier 2001: 178); in my dissertation I will also foreground the correspondences between and across communicative practices based on a clear and detailed analysis of identifiable features of those practices. Applying the notion of ecology to discourse demands the following:

1. First, discovering links between moments of discourse across time and space,
2. second, seeking multiple, possibly contradictory, patterns across instances of discourse,
3. and third, seeing human communication as a contingent and interdependent system of linked activities.

In analyzing the semantico-referential content of my data, I will track and document CHAINS of interactions, including *karintaa*, through which the actions and words of others are presented and represented. I will identify correlations between events and interactions, and the ways these are presented and represented in individual *karintaa*. I will prioritize tracking discourse that concerns highly salient events in the community. Should they EMERGE, I will focus on interpersonal or intergroup CONFLICTS and identify if and how these conflicts are addressed, resolved, or exacerbated in *karintaa*. Conversing regularly with Nanti participants and observers about chains of interactions as they are unfolding is a crucial strategy in documenting the various perspectives and interpretations involved in these events.

2.12 *Describing and analyzing everyday interactions*

If the notion of discursive ecology is dependent on an understanding of principled patterns of organization *among* formally defined ways of speaking and everyday interactions, it is no less dependent upon an understanding of principled patterns of interaction *within* ways of speaking and everyday interactions. As such, the analytical tools forged by conversation analysts are crucial to my analysis of Nanti interactions. In fact, three fundamental principles that pervade the theoretical frameworks of my research project were first articulated among the fundamental

principles guiding conversation analysis. First, the commitment to using ‘naturally occurring’ discourse as the source for data espoused by practitioners of the discourse-centered approach to culture; second, the commitment to giving analytical primacy to patterning that emerges from discourse data espoused by practitioners of ethnopoetics; and third, the notion that communicative interactions are both ‘context shaped’ and ‘context renewing’ were innovations of conversation analysis ((Nofsinger 1999 [1991]), (Goodwin and Heritage, 1990)).

In examining the relationship between *karintaa* and non-*karintaa* interactions, and between *karintaa* and everyday interactions in particular, I echo Robert Nofsinger’s observation that, “We learn conversation first and then apply our conversational skills to other forms of interactive talk.” (Nofsinger 1999 [1991]: 2) I hasten to add that I consider this observation equally valid if taken to encompass the non-verbal aspects of ‘conversation’ in addition to the verbal aspects that Nofsinger was specifically indicating. I would also add that in the case of *karintaa* interactions, it is their difference from and contrast with everyday conversations that is partially constitutive of their significance as communicative action. But at a fundamental level, the point is that all verbal interactions between Nanti – *karintaa* performances included – have certain basic features in common and these basic features are present in everyday forms of interaction. Therefore, using conversation analytical methods to understand the organization of everyday Nanti talk is a necessary precursor to understanding the organization of more formally complex communicative interactions such as *karintaa*.

As conversation analysts have demonstrated for other communicative systems, a key element to understanding large-scale patterns of Nanti interaction is understanding how participants ORGANIZE specific interactions. A seemingly universal characteristic of communicative behavior is that it is always sequential, in as much as interactants always (eventually) alternate their turns at talk. For the ECOLOGICAL approach I am developing, the principles of ALTERNATION₁ that are at work across instances of discourse are crucial to the SYSTEMATICITY of discourse phenomena. In examining Nanti interactions, then, I will use the turn as a PRIMITIVE unit in building my analyses. An important point of departure for analyzing Nanti turn organization is to ask a series of questions based on the work of Sacks et al. (1978):

- what message units constitute a turn in Nanti interactions?
- by what observable means do Nanti interactants negotiate changes in turn?
- what constitutes a ‘transition relevance place’ in Nanti interactions?
- how do Nanti interactants use and manage overlaps in talk?
- how do Nanti interactants use and manage silence in talk?

It is worth noting that many of the “grossly apparent facts” of conversational interaction that Sacks et al. (1978) use as their point of departure may not turn out to be facts in Nanti interactions; but this does not diminish the utility of these “facts” as guidelines for determining the patterning and principles that are (and are not) in operation in Nanti interaction. It is also worth noting that the questions above are relevant – and guaranteed to have different answers – to analysis of the organization of interactional turns both in everyday discourse and in *karintaa* interactions.

Elaborating on these basic questions, I know the following questions will be useful analytical tools in examining my data from Nanti interactions:

- TURN-taking among participants: What indicates a TRP in various Nanti discourse contexts? how do Nantis react to and/or respond to overlaps in talk? what counts as an interruption in Nanti interaction? how do Nantis react to and/or respond to interruptions?
- ALIGNMENT strategies: by what means do Nanti interactants demonstrate alignment – particularly through utterances? what forms of verbal behavior count as alignment in Nanti interactions – back-channeling turns? relatively longer or shorter turns per participant? simultaneous turn-free talk? silence? what forms of physical behavior (including eye gaze, bodily orientation, and simultaneous manual activity) count as alignment in Nanti interactions?
- DISALIGNMENT strategies: by what means do Nanti interactants demonstrate disalignment – particularly through utterances? what forms of verbal behavior count as disalignment in Nanti interactions – back-channeling turns? relatively longer or shorter turns per participant? simultaneous turn-free talk? silence? what forms of physical behavior (including eye gaze, bodily orientation, and simultaneous manual activity) count as disalignment in Nanti interactions?

Another organizing principle from the conversation analytical toolkit that I consider crucial to understanding Nanti interactions is the notion of RECIPIENT DESIGN (Sacks and Schegloff, 1979). That is to say, I assume that interactive talk among individuals is always at least partly motivated by the speaker's immediate assessment of the recipients of their talk as well as their sociostructural and historical links to the recipients; and therefore, at least some aspects of the relevance of talk correspond to identifiable features of the immediate situation as well as of the sociostructural and historical links between speaker and recipient(s). Moreover, because in most cases a given relationship will offer a multiplicity of identifiable features as resources for talk, examining which features are in fact deployed in interactions will reveal the ways in which interactants enact and articulate aspects of their relationships through talk.

Identifying recurrent patterns in conversational sequencing, such as adjacency pairing (Schegloff and Sacks, 1984), adjacent placement (Nofsinger 1999 [1991]), and next positioning (Goodwin and Heritage, 1990) will allow me to understand both CHAINS of association that Nantis make in interactions and NORMATIVE CONSTRAINTS evidenced in talk. Just as observing chains of association between my experiential world and sound sequences – organized at the level of phonemes, morphemes, and utterances – has allowed me to understand many aspects of the formal structure and lexicon of the Nanti LANGUAGE₁, observing chains of association across series of utterances enables me to understand, at least partially, the ways in which Nantis actively create, maintain, and alter their relationships through discourse.

A significant part of the utility in examining such properties of interaction as turn organization, adjacency phenomena, and alignment strategies such as response and repair is that it is precisely the relational nature of these phenomena that reflect the DYNAMICITY and EMERGENT₁ nature of interaction. The importance of careful description of the dialogical patterns in everyday Nanti interactions is doubly important given that one of the key features of *karintaa* performances is their dialogicality.

An important (if restricted) commonality between the 'outside observer' of an interaction and its participants is that both are actively working to make sense of the words and behaviors of other individuals, to whose internal processes they have no access. If the participants have the advantage of greater 'inside knowledge' of what is going on in the real time unfolding of the interaction, the outside observer has the advantage of recording that interaction and reviewing it again and again, discovering the multiplicity of possible alternatives that the interactants might have chosen. It is from this perspective that many of the analytical tools in the conversation

analysis tradition are so useful to a study of discursive ecology. By identifying recurrent features and organizing principles at the level of sequential utterances, the observer learns how interactions unfold through the moment-by-moment moves that interactants make; and the processes through which understanding is achieved (or not) are revealed.

2.13 *Ethnopoetics*

The tradition of text presentation and analysis that has come to be known as ethnopoetics emerged from the Boasian tradition of linguistics and anthropology in the work of Dell Hymes (eg. 1981) and Dennis Tedlock (eg. 1983), who first recognized that existing TEXT ARTIFACTS of indigenous verbal art could be rediscovered by seeking PATTERNS within the text itself. Joel Sherzer and Anthony Woodbury (1987) explain that ethnopoetic analysts “take Native American discourse seriously as their starting point...[and] as having precise and complex linguistic patterning” (1987: 1). Expanding out of their origins in the analysis of existing Native American text artifacts, the analytical principles of the ethnopoetics tradition have proven useful to scholars studying a wide variety of literatures, both oral and written, primarily because ethnopoetics breaks from, and provides a principled alternative to, long-standing descriptive and analytical frameworks confined by structural and aesthetic principles forged in other artistic traditions.

Hymes’ body of work in ethnopoetics has focused on rediscovering Native American texts by transforming written blocks of oral dictation (originally transcribed for linguistic and ethnological purposes) through reanalysis and retranscription that reveals their POETIC form. Tedlock’s work has focused on the process of transcribing into written form TEXTS whose primary existence is or was oral; but both scholars “recognized that an important aspect of Native American discourse and a central feature of its verbal artistry is organization into lines and groups of lines.” (Sherzer and Woodbury 1987: 1) Taking the LINE to be the primary organizational unit of Native American verbal art, ethnopoetic analysis seeks to discover and describe *what makes a line a line* in terms of the patterns of recurrence inherent in the form of the text itself; as well in the performance of the text for oral genres.

Sherzer defines the line as “a unit independent of and yet related to conventionally recognized grammatical units such as phonemes, morphemes, and sentences” and observes that in his own work with Kuna ways of speaking, “[i]nvestigation of the structuring of lines in Kuna discourse requires attention to the intersection and interplay of linguistic, sociolinguistic, and poetic structures, patterns, and processes.” (Sherzer 1987: 103) The line, then, constitutes an independent level of complex organization that ideally exists in the overlap between EMIC and ETIC UNDERSTANDINGS of FORM and PATTERN.

In his ethnopoetic analyses of oral texts, Tedlock has used such features of oral PERFORMANCE_B as alternation between speech and silence and variations in pitch, loudness, voice quality, tempo, and cadence, to define the line. Hymes, concentrating on written texts, has instead focused on features of the texts such as hierarchic and often numerically constrained rhetorical patterns, repetitions, and recurrences in content and syntactic form. Anthony Woodbury, whose work with Central Alaskan Yupik also deals with oral texts, summarizes “five potentially independent types of recurrent, hierarchic organization on which poetic representation has been based: pause phrasing, prosodic phrasing, syntactic constituency, global form-content parallelism, and adverbial particle phrasing.” (Woodbury 1987: 176)

In addition to the potential utility that the specific features used by Hymes, Tedlock, Woodbury, and other ethnopoetic analysts have for the analysis of Nanti *karintaa* performances, an important analytical generalization emerges from their work on text analysis: ethnopoetic

analysts must determine what counts as “the same” across PERFORMANCES_{A & B} and across FORMS and FEATURES based on the PATTERNS INHERENT in the TEXT, not external to it. In addition, the ethnopoetic perspective on the LINE in verbal art suggests two important axes on which texts can be analyzed:

1. First, discrete and independent features of patterning *and* patterning among features co-exist in a particular line and a particular text.
2. Second, more complex patterns of patterning result from interactions across less complex patterns within particular lines and particular texts.

These two axes suggest at least six different levels on which the analyst can seek patterns of organization:

1. Within a single text: features that are defined in universal terms, such as meter, rhythm, and tone.
2. features that are identified by their patterns of CO-OCCURRENCE₁ and ALTERNATION₁, such as repetition and PARALLELISM.
3. features that are regarded as salient by native performers and audience, such as rhyming and punning (neither of which, for example, Nanti find interesting.)
4. Across a set of texts: patterns that are defined in universal terms, such as numerical patterning and topic orientation.
5. patterns of patterns that are identified by co-occurrence and alternation, such as large-scale form-content parallelism.
6. patterns that are regarded as salient by native performers and audience, such as metacategories or TYPES of song and poetry, like a jig or a limerick.

I see ethnopoetic analysis as primarily useful to my research on Nanti ways of speaking in two domains. First, in as much as ethnopoetics is focused on the two-dimensional representation of forms of indigenous verbal art, it will be useful to my own research in the work of creating and presenting TRANSCRIPTS. Second, in as much as ethnopoetics provides a framework for discovering interpenetrating levels of organization within discourse, it will inform the analyses I discuss in other sections of this project.