

# Development of a Subjectivity

by Hugh Alexander David

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## Thesis title and abstract

# **Development of a Subjectivity**

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### **Abstract**

This thesis presents an ethnographic account of an investigation into whether productivity is a useful concept in service sectors where quality is subjectively determined, in the context of how training and education can contribute to an organisation's effectiveness. The ethnographic interest stems principally from the difficulties encountered in pursuing this research question.

At an early stage, the researcher decided to identify the sectors of interest through quantitative analysis of economic data. This proved problematic as the analysis became involved and, though eventually published, would have been difficult to justify within the context of a social science thesis. Accordingly, the researcher switched to a means of identification based on the literature. However, the quantitative analysis had led him to take a fairly literal reading of the research question, and in the first interview this proved highly problematic, leading to significant interactional troubles.

The interview did not 'settle out' in the researcher's mind; as a result, the researcher used detailed textual analysis, particularly conversation analysis, to understand what in intersubjective terms had occurred during the interview. The impact of the interview on the researcher was sufficiently profound to change his emotional orientation towards the research question, and the researcher has detailed how his subjectivity has developed through the research process.

This has led ultimately to the reflection that his approach had been perhaps too literal, too direct; and that a more circuitous approach might perhaps have yielded a less contested, richer and more extensive set of materials which might then have allowed the researcher to address the research question indirectly by using for example discourse analysis.

It is perhaps the documentation of the trajectory towards this ultimate reflective realisation, and the conversation analysis (with accompanying self-commentary) of interactional trouble in a qualitative research interview, that form the contribution of this thesis.

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*A version of this thesis that includes the audio for Excerpt 4 will also be made available by the author in epub format on the iBookstore.*

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## *Chapter 1*

# Introduction

### 1.1 THESIS INTRODUCTION

This thesis tells the story of the development of a subjectivity. The development was spread over three years in a continuum through a number of significant episodes of reflection, points of clarity or resolution, and around an important research incident. The thesis takes the form of thick, reflective auto-ethnography, within which is layered a number of specific methodologies such as quantitative regression analysis and qualitative conversation analysis. It attempts to sculpt out the shape of the new research subjectivity as it develops, through episodic and incidental description and depiction, and in so doing demonstrate the 'broader trajectory', 'the interactional practice' and 'all the layers of work' (Rapley 2012: 553) of an interview research project.

The thesis investigates, as Rapley recommends, some of the 'practical action and reasoning of interview research' (2012: 553), covering both the 'mundane, interactional work *in* interviews' through conversation analysis *and* the wider context of the 'situated, pragmatic work *of* interview research projects' (2012: 552, original italicisation) which is incorporated in the ethnographic account of the research project as a whole. This particular project is also of interest because it does not rely exclusively on discursive methods of interviewing but, again along the lines that Rapley recommends (though he is referring specifically to observation), it combines interviewing with a different methodology, the secondary analysis of (largely non-discursive) economic data.

The conversation analysis of a research interview passage, that forms a major part of the thesis, also contributes to the research agenda put forward

by Mazeland and ten Have (1996: 113) that conversation analysis should be 'applied to interview materials of various kinds in order to yield generalized procedural insight'. This agenda remains incomplete, at least in the case of qualitative interviewing, 'beyond the very basics' (Rapley 2012: 546). In particular, the thesis enacts a single case conversation analysis revisiting the analysis and interpretation of already collected research data, with reflective, auto-ethnographic aspects as exemplified by Roulston (2001).

This follows Roulston's recommendation that conversation analysis, used particularly in a reflective mode on a researcher's own interview data, can be used to revisit researchers' previous analyses of their own interviews and investigate 'interview problems and puzzling interactions in detail' (2011: 93), thus leading to 'a mindful consideration of one's role in the generation of data for research purposes' (2011: 92).

The idea of the thesis, and its focus on the development of a subjectivity, stems from Cho and Trent's (2006) concept of *transformational validity*, in which 'alternative notions of validity should be considered to achieve social justice, deeper understandings, broader visions and other legitimate aims of qualitative research' (Cho and Trent 2006: 324). Under the 'praxis/social change' purpose of research, Cho and Trent talk about how the 'researcher should openly express how his or her own subjectivity has progressively been challenged and thus transformed as he or she collaboratively interacts with his or her participants' (2006: 332). Cho and Trent then go on to say that 'in regard to the major outcome of the report/account, participants should be able to differently perceive and impact the world in which they live' (2006: 332).

The essential heart of this thesis is the documentation of a difficult interview full of interactional trouble that changed the researcher's perception of the world. The thesis attempts to elucidate in intersubjective terms, using

conversation analysis, what these troubles were concerned with; in order to in turn understand why the interview had the strong effect that it did on the researcher.

This effect was essentially that while prior to the interview the researcher had a fairly dispassionate 'academic' approach to the topic of productivity in services, after the interview the researcher found it much harder to maintain this stance.

In some way he had become engaged, involved, and much less prepared to be dissuaded from his thoughts through methods of disputation and logical argument that required the researcher to in some way accept as a tenet or starting point an assumption he was not sure of. This transformation the researcher calls the 'development of a subjectivity'.

## 1.2 DEFINITION OF TERMS

A number of terms are used in this thesis in particular ways.

The term *actor* is used to denote individuals in order to highlight the *active role* of members particularly in regard to service employees' work when they are interacting with customers or clients. Billett and Somerville for example refer to the constructive role of individuals' 'subjectivities and intentionalities' in transforming and improving work practices (2004: 323).

The common discourse associated with Billett and Somerville (2004) is that around the construction of identity at work and the intersubjective nature of workplace learning, focusing on the 'transformative process of enacting change' and how individuals 'contribute to those transformations' (Billett and Somerville 2004: 323-324). It is indeed actors that enact, and so the term 'actor' is used to emphasise this active role in affecting practices in the work place.

The term 'actor' is *not* used here to underline or over-emphasise the characteristics of individuality and separation. Rather, the term 'actor' is used to also speak to Goffman's conception of conversation as intersubjective interaction (1981: 70-71), with the theatrical aspect of 'actor' referencing the self-conscious facet of this intersubjectivity. That is, as enactors of a conversation we are aware of ourselves as actors in a conversation, even as we are aware of the other participants having the same awareness of themselves in relation to the 'conversation', and this mutual self-consciousness is a characteristic of community not isolation.

The researcher has also commonly used the term within the extended phrase 'actors engaged in actual work practices' to emphasis the nature of the actions and enactments that the term 'actor' has itself been used to foreground, with 'actual' signifying the involvement in the work practices themselves rather than theoretical models of the practices, as might be the case say for an auditor or perhaps an accountant.

The researcher has used the term *subjectivity* in a postmodern sense to denote aspects of our fragmented selves. This use is similar to Gubrium and Holstein's (2003) use of 'subject', 'subject position' as well as occasionally 'subjectivity'. A fuller discussion of this can be found in the ontology and epistemology section of Chapter 5.

### 1.3 THE STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

The thesis has been structured in the following way.

#### 1.3.1 Literature review

The main body of the thesis starts with a literature review of service sector productivity. Starting from the researcher's general and professional interest in how productivity works in service sectors, the formal research question around which this thesis developed emerged (eventually) as a question around whether the concept of productivity itself is equally

applicable or useful in all sectors of the economy. The specifics of this formal research question, and how it relates to the literature, are covered in the literature review.

The literature review has been written in the form of a historical narrative reflecting the way that it took form in the researcher's mind, and illustrating how the use of the concept of productivity has developed within the service industry literature, from a background of marketing, quality and strategic management (Chase 1978, Lovelock 1983, Schmenner 1986).

Chapters 2 and 3 form the formal literature review, with Chapter 2 describing the historical development of the concept within the service sectors, going on to look at individual sectors in more detail, and Chapter 3 considering productivity more within the context of training and education.

From around 2005, research into service sector productivity became more fragmented, and the overall picture more complex, as significant differences between service sectors became more apparent and in some industries issues around quality and intersubjectivity became more pressing. These remain concerns. In 2012 the Service Industries Journal issued a call for papers on creativity and innovation in the service sector, citing the importance of creative behaviour among frontline staff and the need for more research into the different skills, motivations and cognitive strategies to accomplish different tasks and the effect of differing job characteristics on the creativity of frontline personnel in consumer services, such as hotels and leisure.

The researcher's understanding of the literature subsequent to the point of fragmentation in 2005 becomes to an increasing degree part of the 'story of the research'. In what sense can such a more fragmented picture be viewed as a 'body of literature' about a research topic? More recent research, therefore, is also presented variously in the methodology, findings

and discussion chapters as shaped aspects of the researcher's unfolding subjectivity.

### 1.3.2 Methodology

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 then form the methodological section, with Chapters 4 and 5 concentrating on ethnographic aspects, and Chapter 6 detailing the method of conversation analysis.

Chapter 4 discusses early methodological approaches. These included an initial trial interview with an employer representative body, which was designed as a possible way of garnering views representative of a broad, varied service sector, and a quantitative sub-method based on analysing economic data which was the approach that the researcher first used to identify the particular service sectors of most interest. These sectors were those where it was reasonable to anticipate that the concept of productivity might be most problematic.

Chapter 4 also discusses in detail *episodes of reflection* and *points of clarity or resolution* which, along with the research continuum and the major research incident made up of the first interview undertaken with a revised planned methodology, comprise the ethnographic substance of this research project. The chapter also discusses the ethnographic materials that were to hand, as the research was not originally conceived of as an ethnographic study, and so a detailed research diary, for example, was not kept on a consistent basis.

The discussion of the quantitative approach looks closely at how the idea for a quantitative analysis originated in the researcher's mind, as a result of reflection on how to critically examine whether productivity is a good or bad thing, when an unstated assumption that seems often prevalent is that improving productivity is a good thing. Though this quantitative analysis does not play a central role in the thesis, it was eventually published, and

the story of it, and how the development of the researcher's subjectivity came to play an important role in that story, are therefore taken up again in Chapter 9.

Chapter 5 covers the revised planned research methodology, one consisting of a series of semi-structured interviews with employees of organisations in the sectors of interest followed by a thematic analysis. The chapter sets out how this planned method differed from the one initially considered, and how these differences (as well as developments in the research question) came about.

The key changes were a switch in the research population from employees of employer representative bodies to employees of organisations within the sectors of interest; a new method for selecting the sectors of interest based more directly on the research literature; and a tighter focus on the usefulness of productivity as a concept, rather than what it might mean.

Chapter 5 also includes a discussion of the researcher's epistemological and ontological position, and how this developed through the project, from realism towards constructionism, as understanding what had occurred during the interactions in the first interview undertaken using the revised planned methodology, when the topic of productivity was introduced, became paramount.

The chapter finishes with a description of the researcher's preparations for the planned interviews which included reading up on topics concerning training and education in the sectors of interest. The chapter covers an extensive sample of this literature, as it was this reading that contributed significantly to the researcher's mental context as he engaged in the first interview, and is therefore particularly relevant to *how* the topic of productivity was introduced by the researcher within the interview. This is



important because it affected in turn how the intersubjective communication and interactions developed thereafter.

### 1.3.3 The conversation analysis method

The following chapter, Chapter 6, then sets out first how the first interview using the revised planned research methodology unfolded, explaining how it did not 'settle out' in the researcher's mind. This in turn led to an intense period of reflection, with the researcher resolving to try and understand why this 'settling out' did not occur, by using detailed textual analysis of the interview.

In the researcher's first submission of his thesis, the detailed textual analysis had been done through a comparison with an example of interactional troubles from Sarangi (2000). However, at viva this analysis was shown to be incomplete, and the new method presented here is one of conversation analysis, based principally on Sacks (1992a, 1992b), Rapley (2001), ten Have (2007), Hutchby and Wooffitt (2008) and Sidnell (2010), with elements from Rapley and Antaki (1998). The detailed rationale for the choice of conversation analysis is based on Roulston (2011) and (2001), with the parsing of the findings drawing also on Roulston (2001), as well as Rapley (2004).

The comparison with Sarangi (2000) remains, but this is now used to identify the features that might be considered potentially characteristic of interactional trouble within interviews.

Then, by comparison with again Sarangi (2000) and also Rapley (2001), which contains a consideration of interactional troubles within a qualitative research interview, the researcher shows that these characteristics (pauses, repetition or insistence, and overlapping talk) are indeed also present within the interview transcript, and thus it is reasonable to conclude that interactional troubles are present.

Conversation analysis is then used to analyse these troubles in intersubjective terms, followed by a relatively compact membership characterisation device analysis to try and also draw out what, in terms of topic content, the researcher might take, and in fact did take, from the interview.

Chapter 6 contains a description of these methods, including the significant conversation analytic theoretic elements or objects drawn from the literature that were used during the course of the conversation analysis.

#### 1.3.4 The findings chapters

Chapters 7 and 8 then present the findings from the analysis.

Chapter 7 gives a description and analysis of the earlier part of the interview, the first 51 minutes, before the topic of productivity was introduced. The researcher then goes on to show how the post-51st minute passage concerning productivity is different in nature, and that it is a passage which contains a considerable amount of interactional trouble.

Chapter 8 contains the conversation analysis of this post-51st minute passage on productivity. Features that are analysed are the use of preference and questioner-preferred answers, the construction of multiple turn-constructual units in a single extended turn, methods of repair, whether the researcher's intention to ask a fairly literal question led to confusion about what the 'project of the question' (Sacks 1992a) might be, an attempt by the researcher to prematurely close a topic and how the resultant topic-ambiguity was repaired, and the use of exact repetition to confirm allusions or inferences during interaction concerning topical content. There is also a consideration of how insertion sequences are closed, drawing on examples from Hutchby and Wooffitt (2008) and Sidnell (2010).

The chapter finishes with the membership characterisation device analysis, which focuses particularly on the 'contrast pairs' (Baker 2004) used by the respondent, and a consideration of possible alternative conversation analytic trajectories that might have been taken.

#### 1.3.5 Discussion and further research

The final chapter, Chapter 9, then picks up the ethnographic account. This describes how the intersubjective experience of the interview had a profound affect on the researcher, taking him from a fairly academic stance towards productivity in the service sectors of interest, to a stance that was much more emotionally involved and committed. This process the researcher describes as being a development of his subjectivity towards productivity.

The quantitative thread of the research project also resurfaces at this point, and the researcher describes how his newly developed subjectivity provided the perseverance and perspective which enabled him to take this analysis through, eventually, to publication. This thus gives a performative aspect to the qualitative research presented in this thesis.

The final part of Chapter 9 then considers two topics that might warrant further consideration by other researchers. The first is in the area of what Sacks calls 'distributionalizing' or identifying where something goes (1992b: 570), where the researcher looks at a particular formation of fairly similar multiple turn-constructual units separated by possible transition-relevance places which are not taken up by the co-participant. These appear in the interview, in the example from Sarangi (2000), and in the excerpts from Rapley (2001), at broadly similar points in the sequence after the introduction of a new topic.

The second topic of possible future research draws on an overall ethnographic reflection, as to whether the interactional troubles occurred

fundamentally because the researcher took a too literal approach to investigating the research question. The line of reasoning drawn out here, building on Roulston (2001) and Rapley (2012), is whether methods of qualitative inquiry based on interviewing may benefit from being enacted with greater awareness of the wider contexts within which they are planned, implemented and analysed.

Such greater awareness might have regard to, for example, the local moral orders that can emerge during interviews, the wider social, historical and cultural discourses within which researchers and participants enact interviews, and consideration of the connection between what occurs in interviews and more naturalistic settings.

These ethnographic reflections finish with a consideration of the particular contribution that this thesis is designed to make, serving so the researcher hopes as a useful explication of the process outlined above of enacting the unplanned deployment of a research tool, specifically here conversation analysis, in order to address a particular research issue as it arose; an explication which will be available as a resource for other researchers in the future who may find themselves in a similar position.

The point of departure for this story, then, is a consideration of the research literature on service sector productivity, starting with how it gradually emerged from manufacturing to become applied in service contexts.

## *Chapter 2*

# The development of the concept of productivity in the service sector

### 2.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE LITERATURE REVIEW

In this thesis, the researcher eventually came to be seeking an answer to the formal research question ‘Is productivity a useful concept for actors within Nottingham service organisations where service quality is subjectively determined when considering the contribution of training and education to the organisation’s effectiveness?’ As well as the contextual question of what type of training and education benefits such organisations, there are two key concepts: that of productivity and that of service quality.

The literature review focuses first on the concepts of productivity and quality, looking from the point of view of historical origins and their development in the service sector (this chapter). Chapter 3 then narrows the scope towards the context of training and education by considering research covering the link between training and education and productivity, and in particular how this link contrasts in some service sectors with the experience of manufacturing sectors. Chapter 3 also draws together the conclusions of the literature review, showing how the research question was a development on from the existing research base.

Productivity is a concept that originates from manufacturing. The application of the concept of productivity to the service sector is of course context-dependent and may therefore be affected by the structure of the sector to which it is being applied. Therefore, it is useful to summarise the development of structural issues that have influenced and have been the subject of research into service sectors.

These structural issues are in turn: the need to classify services by service characteristics rather than simply by industry, in order to allow a focus on innate similarities, and the resultant seminal research literature from which later analyses and attitudes have developed; secondly, the development of empirically-based classification and analysis schemes as the important role of quality and perceived customer experience became more widely recognised; thirdly, a number of different approaches to adapting the concept of productivity to a service sector context, alongside quality and the customer experience; and finally, subsequent empirical research including case studies and research that points to the need for greater differentiation between service sectors.

## 2.2 EARLY DEVELOPMENTS: THE CLASSIFICATION OF SERVICES

Initially and prior to explicit considerations of service sector productivity, there was a need identified to classify services according to the innate characteristics of the service rather than simply by industrial sector (Lovelock 1983: 9). According to Gummesson (1998: 5), while systematic approaches to quality in manufacturing started from the 1920's, there was no such research available for services in the 1970's. Lovelock connected the lack of systematic services research, in the area of marketing, with a 'somewhat inbred' approach to management, in which 'each industry is different' (1983: 10).

A successful classification, therefore, based on innate characteristics of the service rather than the particular sector would, so the argument ran, open up the opportunity for 'the cross-fertilization of concepts and strategies' (Lovelock 1983: 10), for quality as much as for marketing. This argument was also put forward by Schmenner (1986: 21) and Chase (1978: 138 and 141) in the context of strategic management.

While this diagnosis appears to mix together observations from different disciplines of quality and marketing, these two disciplines are strategically

connected, as marketing strategies need to be co-ordinated with quality and productivity strategies, particularly in the area of customer loyalty (Gummesson 1998, Keltner *et al.* 1999: 86, Blois 1984).

There have been three seminal developments in the classification of services, and developing the theory of how services differ from manufacturing, on which subsequent developments have been based, all stemming from the United States of America (USA). The first was articulated by Shostack (1977), who identified intangibility as the key distinguishing feature of services as opposed to goods (1977: 73) and hence the importance of customers' subjective experience in marketing and competitive strategy.

This was closely followed by Chase (1978), who identified that the degree of customer contact was a fundamental way of distinguishing between different services in the context of strategic management (1978: 138), and that for high customer contact services there was a limit (in most cases) to the degree to which system and technological solutions could be applied before compromising the 'quality of the service experience' (1978: 140).

Common to these two authors was the recognition of the customer's experience as an important consideration in managing services. A number of associated connected issues and limitations were identified by or can be tracked back to these early authors. Shostack identified that on account of the intangibility of services, the minority of aspects that were tangible played a disproportionate role in marketing (1977: 77): what would later be referred to as 'search dimensions' (Parasuraman *et al.* 1985).

Shostack also pointed towards the customer experiencing the company in a form of holistic continuous reality which might not be easily subject to episodic analysis (1977: 76). Chase observed that high customer contact

services were 'more difficult to control' (1978: 138), a point given consideration by Morris and Johnston (1987).

### 2.3 QUALITY, THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE AND PRODUCTIVITY

The picture of services thus painted by the end of the 1970's was based on the observations of those experienced in working and researching in the service industries in the USA. The next stage, best represented by Parasuraman *et al.* (1985) and Schmenner (1986) and still USA based, was to develop classifications and analysis based more directly on empirical data. These studies increased the focus on quality and the customer experience, and the associated theme of developing further the difference in emphasis between those services more reliant on customer contact and those more reliant on technology and capital.

At the same time, theoretical contributions to productivity in service industries were being developed in the UK by developing greater focus on process as a logical consequence of the importance of the customer's subjective experience (Johnston and Morris 1985, Morris and Johnston 1987, Blois 1984), and Scandinavian influence is felt through Gronroos's (1982) contribution on the importance of customers' expectations in evaluating the quality of a service, Vuorinen *et al.* (1998) introducing an approach to defining service sector productivity in which quality is considered intrinsic, and Gummesson (1998) looking at the contribution of customer loyalty to service profitability.

Parasuraman *et al.* interviewed a number of customers and executives in the financial sector and in the repair and maintenance sector, to find out the key determinants of service quality (1985: 43). They identified ten determinants (1985: 47), which they characterised as 'search properties', 'experience properties' and 'credence properties', depending on how easy the determinants were for customers to evaluate (Parasuraman *et al.* 1985:



48). This three-way classification was derived from Nelson (1974) and Darby and Karni (1973).

Search properties related to properties that could be determined prior to using the service, such as tangibles, that could therefore be used for marketing purposes prior to purchase (1985: 48) re-inforcing Shostack's analysis (1977: 77). Parasuraman *et al.* also included credibility as a search property (1985: 48). The credibility determinant includes company name and company reputation (1985: 47), which aspects have overtones of corporate image which appears later in Andreassen and Lindestad's (1998) research investigating the relationship between customer loyalty, perceived quality and customer satisfaction.

'Credence' properties are those determinants that cannot be evaluated, even after using the service, such as the competence of the service personnel and the security and safety of the customer (Parasuraman *et al.* 1985: 48). If such credence properties dominate the customer relationship, then for these services the 'experience properties' may not play a prominent role.

But in other cases, Parasuraman *et al.* argue that customers rely on the experience properties, those determinants that they can evaluate as they use the service, to judge the quality of a service, and customer satisfaction depends on whether the perception of the service as evidenced through these experience properties exceeds or falls short of the expectation (1985: 42, 48, drawing on Gronroos 1982 and Churchill & Suprenaut 1982). The empirically identified experience properties or determinants are: access, courtesy, reliability, responsiveness, understanding/knowing the customer, and communication (Parasuraman *et al.* 1985: 47, 48).

Schmenner (1986) develops a partially empirically-based classification matrix of services looking in greater detail at Chase's (1978) classification

based on the degree of customer contact. This classification scheme makes use of economic data to classify service sectors by 'labor intensity', that is 'the ratio of the labor cost incurred to the value of the plant and equipment' (Schmenner 1986: 21). However, Schmenner does not focus strongly on the customer experience as central to developing service quality, and retains a strong manufacturing orientation, talking about labour productivity (1986: 30) and emphasising the strategic importance of 'control and lower costs' (1986: 31).

The emphasis that Schmenner puts on control is in contrast to developments in thinking going on in the UK and increasingly Scandinavia. Johnston and Morris (1985) identify that a consequence of the customer being involved during the delivery of a service means that the process itself must be considered in its own right as a source of customer satisfaction (1985: 38). They go on to develop the argument that the presence of the customer within the delivery process leads to much greater inherent variability of the process, and therefore quality improvement, production management and efficiency strategies based on reducing variability may be counter-productive for some service sectors (Morris and Johnston 1987: 15, 21-22).

Blois (1984) argues that, because in service industries it is the customer's perception of the service that is critical (1984: 55) and because attempts to improve productivity (here used in terms of reducing unit costs) nearly always lead to changes in the way a service is provided and hence may change the way that a service is perceived by customers (1984: 51), matters of productivity and efficiency are of legitimate interest to a service company's marketing department.

Vuorinen *et al.* (1998) proposed an intrinsic approach in which the concept of quality should be inherent in the concept of productivity; although some authors maintained a view that productivity should be considered alongside

(but not separately to) productivity, rather than intrinsic to it (e.g. Gummesson 1998, Van Looy *et al.* 1998, Johnston and Jones 2004).

Gummesson (1998), drawing on Reichheld (1996), placed customer loyalty (willingness to repurchase or recommend) not simply customer satisfaction as a key stage in profitability. Andreassen and Lindestad (1998) conducted a complex piece of research investigating how experience properties (perceived quality/customer satisfaction) link to intangible search properties (corporate image) and price (value), to produce customer loyalty.

These developments paved the way for Gronroos and Ojasalo's (2004) definition of service productivity using financial measures in essentially value-added terms, using price as a measure of perceived quality, and thus enabling a potential cross-over to gross value added and macro-level measures of productivity (e.g. Crespi *et al.* 2006).

The subjective customer experience in this way became central, with customer satisfaction depending on a comparison of the perceived quality against the expected quality, and quality considered by some as intrinsic to the concept of service sector productivity, with quality measurable through price. The concept of productivity was separated from profitability through the distinction between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty, with customer loyalty involving intangible 'search properties' of corporate image and reputation (Vuorinen *et al.* 1998, Gummesson 1998, Andreassen and Lindestad 1998, Gronroos and Ojasalo 2004).

Within this general development, some services may be dominated by 'credence properties', making it difficult for the customer to effectively evaluate the quality (Parasuraman *et al.* 1985).

## 2.4 MULTI-SECTOR RESEARCH

Much of this early research was conceptual. Some empirical confirmation for the importance of the customer experience and its impact on an organisation's approach came from a meta-analysis of 11 case studies of large UK service organisations, showing a relationship between high customer contact time, a process focus (as opposed to a product focus) and a people focus (as opposed to equipment focus), though there were exceptions for the retailer of confectionery and newspapers, the transport company and the transport terminus in the sample (Silvestro *et al.* 1992: 71-72).

As further empirical multi-sector productivity research was conducted, the variation between service sectors was thrown into sharper focus. Four pieces of research illustrate this point. These are Jagger *et al.* (2005) looking at links between gross value added (GVA), multi-factor productivity (MFP) and skills levels, Mason *et al.* (2007) looking at GVA and quality-adjusted labour, Johnson *et al.* (2006) who look at the effectiveness of sector skills councils (SSCs), and Tamkin *et al.* (2008) looking at statistical links between high performance work practices and profitability and labour productivity. For a general treatment of growth accounting and multi-factor or total factor productivity, the reader is referred to Timmer *et al.* (2007).

Jagger *et al.* (2005) show that there are wider variations in how multi-factor productivity correlates with skill levels across service sectors than across production sectors.

For the ten service sectors Jagger *et al.* considered there was a fairly even spread between positive and negative correlations. Four had a positive correlation of MFP levels with high level or intermediate level education, two had a negative correlation, and four sectors fell in between having no significant interactions between the MFP level and either high or intermediate level education (Jagger *et al.* 2005: 111-112).

In contrast, of the 13 sectors on the production side of the economy from Agriculture to Construction, all but two had a positive interaction between the level of MFP and either high level or intermediate level education. The two exceptions had no significant interactions either positive or negative.

Mason *et al.* (2007) comment that empirical evidence supporting the impact of human capital on economic performance is 'still weak at various points' (Sianesi and van Reenen 2003: 192 in Mason *et al.* 2007: 10) and in their research find that the returns to human capital measured in terms of quality adjusted labour on GVA is lower for non-manufacturing than for manufacturing, though not significantly so (Mason *et al.* 2007: 44-45).

An evaluation of the effectiveness of SSCs (Johnson *et al.* 2006), one of whose strategic objectives is to 'improve productivity, business and public services performance through specific strategic actions based on analysis of sectoral priorities' (2006: 2), reveals some of the difficulties in communicating effectively between government and employers in the area of productivity and skills. The chosen measure of success in progress towards the strategic objectives concerning productivity is that of labour productivity in terms of GVA per worker and gross domestic product (GDP) per hour worked (Johnson *et al.* 2006: 16). This evaluation recognises considerable differences in kind between sectors (2006: iii) and has undertaken 'consultations' with SSCs to contextualise the different performance on 'scorecard indicators' in different sectors (2006: 13).

In discussing Jagger *et al.* (2005), and also Dickerson (2005), in the context of sectoral progress measured by the labour productivity indicators and the impact of skills on productivity, and presumably taking into account feedback from the consultations with SSCs, Johnson *et al.* comment:

This suggests an urgent need for SSCs . . . to develop appropriate sector-specific productivity and/or performance measures, taking into account differing interpretations and perceived significance of

the term 'productivity' between sectors and between different stakeholders within sectors (Johnson *et al.* 2006: 18).

Tamkin *et al.* (2008) investigated the link between high performance work practices and business performance, including measures of profitability and turnover (2008: 13), using the '4A model of capability' for human resource management encompassing access, ability, aptitude and application (2008: 7) in a range of service sectors (2008: 9-10). The different sectors varied considerably in average performance in each of the '4As' (2008: 29-31).

Their fitted model was found to explain 18% of the variation in gross profits per full time equivalent (FTE) employee, with a positive correlation between gross profit per FTE and a composite 4A measure (2008: 44). In contrast, the measure of sales per FTE, referred to as 'labour productivity', was not found to have a significant overall correlation with the 4A composite index (2008: 46). No analysis of different sectoral response rates to the 4A measure was presented, except for the comment that in the 'labour productivity' model Hotels and Restaurants was found to have a significantly positive fitted parameter.

Though it is difficult to draw exact conclusions, these four multi-sector analyses paint a broad picture of a wide variation in the characteristics of productivity between service sectors, and between service and production sectors. This is an important conclusion, and Jagger *et al.* (2005) in particular provided the researcher with a starting point for further investigation of this phenomenon using quantitative analysis. This quantitative sub-strand formed an important early line of enquiry within the researcher's overall research programme into the phenomenon of productivity within service industries, to which the subjectivity whose development is described in this thesis eventually contributed significantly in a performative mode.

A greater awareness of the differentiation in the phenomenon of productivity between service sectors within the research community articulated itself through more specific research conducted within particular sectors, complementing the attempts to describe the across-sector variation through multi-sector analyses. The next section now looks at this more sector-specific research in broad service sectors that include industries with high customer contact, as it is in these that the question of the subjective determination of quality based on interaction between customer and staff is likely to be more evident. These broad sectors are retail and wholesale, hotels, restaurants and tourism, and public services.

## 2.5 RETAIL AND WHOLESALE

Considering retail and wholesale first, Griffith *et al.* (2006) look at variations in productivity within the UK building and plumbing wholesale industry. They find that there is persistent variation through time in levels of productivity even between different branches of the same firm (2006: 520). The definition of productivity that they use is a margin based one, the ratio of sales minus the cost of goods sold to labour cost (Griffith *et al.* 2006: 516), and this is related to the non-financial aspects of a 'balanced score card' that the company uses to performance manage individual stores (2006: 521-522).

The balanced score card included 11 measures made up as follows: four customer measures (including customer satisfaction); three people measures including staff retention and employee satisfaction; three internal (operational) measures; and one supplier measure (spend with preferred suppliers). One of the customer measures was the change in 'margin-enhancing products' compared to the previous year. Griffith *et al.* observe a correlation between the balanced score card and productivity across the branches, though no R-squared or significance tests are given (Griffith *et al.* 2006: 521).

Jones *et al.* (2006) relate productivity in 34 retail outlets in Finland, all belonging to the same company, to measures used by the company to monitor the human resource management (HRM) environment for sales clerks. These measures included one objective measure, the percentage of staff who had had development talks with their supervisor or manager, and five perceptual measures gathered from staff, such as the degree of information sharing and whether the supervisor treats the employees fairly (2006: 532-3). Like Griffith *et al.* (2006), the measure of productivity is a margin based one in use by the company, regressed on two key inputs of hours worked and retail floor space, which Jones *et al.* describe as 'standard in the retail literature' (2006: 532).

Using principal component analysis, both development talks and the perceptual measures taken together were found to have a positive impact on productivity, though the resultant decrease in R-squared was small (Jones *et al.* 2006: 535-536). Jones *et al.* comment that there is 'an emphasis . . . placed on personalised customer service and interaction with customers' (2006: 532). In comparing results to a similar study on productivity in a chain of less capital intensive stores, Jones *et al.* argue that the impact of HRM policies on productivity may be lower in more capital intensive companies (2006: 536).

While looking at the impact of high performance work practices, Tamkin (2005: 27), referencing Barber *et al.* (1999), note that employee commitment is linked to customer satisfaction, customer loyalty and reduced staff absence in the retail industry in the UK.

In summary, at the firm level, productivity in wholesale and retail tends to be interpreted as unit volume of sales times margin, divided by labour, or in the case of retail, floor space. People are seen to play an important role in determining value added, through for example commitment, personalised service, building customer loyalty and through increasing sales of high



margin products. It is thus not a simple question of reducing labour, but managing a relatively low skilled workforce effectively, and at the same time as managing costs.

## 2.6 HOTELS, RESTAURANTS AND TOURISM

Moving on to hotels, restaurants and tourism, Brown and Dev (2000) analyse hotel productivity for two chains of hotels in the USA, using a sample of 247 hotels. Brown and Dev use two definitions of productivity. The first, referred to as 'labor productivity', is used in the introduction and is defined as sales per employee, similar to Tamkin *et al.*'s (2008) usage (Brown and Dev 2000: 340). The second definition used in the analysis is 'value added', defined as revenues less amounts remitted to the owning or franchising chain (2000: 344). The size of the hotel is categorised by the number of rooms, over 200 being large, and 125-200 being medium.

After allowing for the effect of labour and capital (in the form of the number of rooms), factors that were found to affect value added were for medium hotels whether they were upscale or mid-market, with upscale hotels having almost double the value added, and for large hotels whether they were run by branded management companies or were chain owned, increasing value added by around 50% and 25% respectively (Brown and Dev 2000: 347).

Keltner *et al.* (1999) performed a comparative study of two non-financial productivity measures in 3\* and 4\* hotels in the USA, Germany and Britain. The productivity measures they used are referred to as 'housekeeping' defined as average guest nights per FTE and 'front office' defined as 'average occupied rooms per FTE' (1999: 90). The average size of the hotels in the sample varied by country. It was 253 in the USA, representing Brown and Dev's (2000: 346) classification of large, and 156 and 166 in Germany and Britain respectively, representing Brown and Dev's medium-sized hotels.

Keltner *et al.* found bigger variations in productivity levels between countries for the housekeeping measure than for the front office measure (1999: 90). Bearing in mind that Brown and Dev found no impact of upscale strategies on value added for large hotels in the USA, but a very significant impact for medium size hotels, and if we equate upscale with 4\* and mid-market with 3\*, then because the USA sample is representative of large hotels and the German and British samples are representative of medium hotels, then we would expect much higher disparities in productivity between 3\* and 4\* hotels in the German and British results than the USA results. This is indeed what Keltner *et al.* found: the relative housekeeping productivity differential between British 4\* hotels and 3\* hotels is 56% higher than in the USA, and in Germany is 85% higher than in the USA (Keltner *et al.* 1999: 90).

These two studies, when taken together, suggest that for medium sized hotels it is important to have a differentiated niche marketing strategy in order to compete with larger hotels.

Kilic and Okumus (2005) looked at 27 factors influencing productivity in 51 small 4\* and 5\* hotels in Northern Cyprus. The 27 factors were drawn from the research and industrial literature, but the researchers did not explicitly define the term 'productivity'. The research was conducted using a survey of hotel managers where respondents were asked the degree to which they agreed that a range of factors influenced productivity, with strongly agree coded as 1 and disagree strongly coded as 5. The 27 factors included factors concerned with the skills and training of staff generally (Kilic and Okumus 2005: 323). Only two factors scored 2.0 or better, these were staff recruitment (1.82) and staff training (2.0) (Kilic and Okumus 2005: 325). In contrast, for example, labour costs scored 2.71 and new technology scored 3.28.

Andreassen and Lindestad (1998) analysed a survey of 600 customers of package tour operators in Norway. They found that 'corporate image rather than customer satisfaction is the main predictor of customer loyalty' (1998: 20). This can be interpreted to mean that it is not simply the last experience of a company that influences future purchases or recommendations, but a combination of that experience together with other past experiences and other factors that contribute to a company's corporate image. This conclusion allows for resilience within a brand to a proportion of poor experiences.

The overall picture of this sector, therefore, is one where there are competitive pressures to move upmarket and where branding and corporate image can play an important role. Productivity is viewed mainly in terms of sales or volume per employee, as the number of employees is a key management variable (Brown and Dev 2000: 348). This does not though translate into a simple equation of reducing staff to improve productivity. So for example, Keltner *et al.* warn against the:

conventional wisdom on service sector productivity [that] equates higher levels of performance with higher levels of efficiency in the use of labor . . . In particular, in higher value-added market segments, a more labor-intensive service delivery was expected to improve not hurt performance . . . [and] was believed to increase customer loyalty, help to develop a customer relationship that competitors would find difficult to replicate, and therefore to support premium pricing (Keltner *et al.* 1999: 98).

## 2.7 PUBLIC SERVICES

In public services, there is a very broad range of approaches to improving productivity or quality. An example from the research literature of developing productivity indicators in public services is Van Looy *et al.* (1998). Van Looy *et al.* (1998) look at developing productivity indicators in a Belgian hospital, and also a health insurance company. The productivity indicators were based on drivers such as the number of consultations and

examinations, number of patient visits and the number of forms to process (1998: 365).

These are input related measures, and Van Looy *et al.* recognised that if productivity indicators are based around such measures, then there needs to be a set of quality indicators to compensate, otherwise the productivity indicators may have the effect of driving the quality of service down (1998: 368).

Where quantity and quality indicators have been determined centrally, the question of local recognition and ownership arises, as Van Looy *et al.* conclude:

As no real process can be documented to cover everything, the indicators will always be an approximate of the real process and there will always be room for 'cooking the figures'. Avoiding such defensive or even contra-productive ways of working with the indicators can only be achieved by involving employees in the development process and by situating these tools in a constructive and collaborative working relationship between management and employees (Van Looy *et al.* 1998: 374).

A key government strategy in improving quality in public services is through the requirements of initial training. In the UK, changes in classroom practice have been supported by government-directed changes in the knowledge, skills and values transmitted through initial teacher training (Furlong *et al.* 2000: 6), thus creating a gradual change in the 'quality of input' of the schools' sector through the skills and education of its new employees. Ardenghi *et al.* (2007) describe how the study of ethical practice in dentist school leads to a complex process of learning within professional practice as the new entrant learns how to apply the ethical knowledge in practical situations (2007: 249).

Pare and Le Maistre describe how learning to work within the increasingly common multi-disciplinary teams, that is teams with greater access to

specialised knowledge, is one of the more challenging aspects of induction into social work in Montreal (2006: 365). In research into the care sector in Sweden, Ellstrom *et al.* conclude that the ability to respond positively to the challenges of high care demands together with the associated learning that this entails is higher where care workers have a higher level of formal education and training (Ellstrom *et al.* 2008: 94 & 95).

In contrast to formal education and training, Billett and Somerville drawing on contexts such as aged care and mortuaries as well as small business operators (2004: 318, 319, 321) distinguish between 'uniform [government] program[s]' and the constructive role of individuals' 'subjectivities and intentionalities' in transforming and improving work practices (Billett and Somerville 2004: 323). Billett and Somerville's focus on the subjective involvement of workers contributing to improving quality is an important one, and their paper proved to be another key stepping stone for the researcher.

The approach to improving quality or productivity in the public service sectors is thus not subject to consensus. The public service sectors are sectors with high levels of government involvement, with the government able to influence levels of required qualifications and pay scales, and exert significant pressure through public audit and public enquiry. Qualifications, as a form of assurance of competence and quality, are therefore important; and initial training is an important source of improving quality.

But in addition, individual agency is also an important source of ideas for innovation, and this may be particularly so where customers are not themselves well represented in the relationship, for example when the government is the purchaser on behalf of another. That is, there are many occasions where collective rather than private returns form a dominant part of the economic relationship.

## 2.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter has looked at the early development of productivity as a concept in service industries, and analysed multi-sector analyses, as well as case studies in particular sectors, to gain greater insight into productivity and quality in high customer contact sectors. This research generally showed variation within as well as between sectors. Influential authors such as Chase (1978), Lovelock (1983) and Schmenner (1986) initially argued for a research approach that looked at innate characteristics that were common across sectors; but subsequently, a wide range of authors showed that the differences between sectors or groups of sectors were substantive.

Whichever is the most effective approach, whether looking at characteristics that may be common and innate across a range of sectors or considering each sector on its own, it is clear from this survey that there is no agreed definition of productivity, and multiple approaches have been used by researchers, even within a single service sector.

As well as sectoral differences in productivity, and how productivity links with skills and qualifications, another emergent theme is that in many pieces of research the definitions of productivity are applied to the sector from the outside, as a lattice of analysis.

In other research, productivity may emerge as a concept used by actors engaged in actual work practices within the sector. However, the evidence from the research literature is that the concept of productivity emerging from, or being used in, interactions with actors engaged with actual work practices seems to be rare in many service sectors. The only example above is that of Kilic and Okumus, though it should be noted that they explicitly comment that:

. . . senior managers seemed to have limited or superficial knowledge on productivity management and its measurement in hotels. They mainly referred to tangible and financial input and output factors (Kilic and Okumus 2005: 322).

Thus, even where researchers engaged specifically with actors on the topic of productivity, there was little found to be forthcoming from the actors' side.

As well as Kilic and Okumus, the researcher has drawn attention to two papers in particular which played significant roles in subsequent developments. Jagger *et al.*'s (2005) quantitative analysis was the starting point for the researcher's analysis of the differences in the quantitative characteristics of productivity between service sectors, and Billett and Somerville (2004) was the starting point for the further investigations that would lead to an eventual revision of the planned research methodology that resulted in a qualitative analytic approach centred on conversation analysis.

The literature survey has so far traced the transition from a position of the possibility of a simple transfer of the concept of productivity from a manufacturing to a service sector context to a recognition that there are in fact many differences between service sectors that may make such an application far from straightforward. It also gradually become apparent during the literature review that most of the research concerned with service sector productivity has applied the concept externally. There is accordingly little evidence that the concept is used explicitly by or arises from actors engaged in actual work practices in the sectors that have been looked at in greater detail.

The second part of the literature review will therefore focus more closely on to what extent productivity is an emergent concept, using the links between productivity and training and education that are evident in the research literature as a context of investigation. This selection of context was based

on Kilic and Okumus's findings amongst hotel managers (who were the main examples that the researcher found in the literature of actors engaged in actual work practices who had been respondents on the topic of productivity) of a high rating for staff training as an influencer of productivity. The thinking here was that as this link between productivity and staff training was emergent amongst actors, investigating this link further might be a good route into identifying occasions when productivity itself had been found to be an emergent concept.



## *Chapter 3*

# Service sector productivity in the context of training and education

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter looked at how the application of the concept of productivity to services grew out of manufacturing, and how this application produces varying results across service sectors. Furthermore, the amount of published empirical research into service productivity is surprisingly small (Johnston and Jones 2004: 201), the quantitative characteristics of productivity appear to vary between sectors (e.g. Jagger *et al.* 2005), and productivity does not seem to be a common explicit topic amongst employees in many service sectors. This raised the possibility in the researcher's mind that productivity as a concept is not equally useful in all areas of the economy. This chapter therefore looks in greater detail at the use of the concept of productivity in specific service sectors, particularly in the context of discussions around training and education.

The sequence that is being traced here is, in simple terms, the application of a concept to a new field, the discovery that the concept does not apply equally in all areas of the new field, and then the possibly connected observation that in some areas there are not many examples, or at least none that the researcher has found, of researchers finding the concept actually being used by workers in the field. It therefore made sense to the researcher to conduct a further closer examination of these areas, in order to assess whether this absence of evidence might be significant, in a topical context (training and education) where at least an emergent link to the concept of productivity had been found, even if there had been no actual example of emergent use of the concept of productivity itself.

The first section considers the asymmetrical nature of the relationship between productivity and training. Discussions around productivity are usually associated with discussions about training, but for service sectors a discussion of training needs is not commonly associated with discussion about productivity. A sample search is used to point up what seems to be a difference between services, or at least some services, and manufacturing. In manufacturing, discussion of training needs *does* usually seem to also involve discussion of productivity issues.

The second section looks more closely at how the concept of productivity is used in service sector research, whether as a lattice of analysis or more rarely directly with actors engaged in actual work practices.

The next section then looks at why there might be difficulties in discussing productivity directly with actors. This section explores further some of the ideas of Billett and Somerville (2004), looking at examples of the link between macro-level productivity and productivity within specific sectors. This section draws principally on Pillay *et al.* (2003), Sambrook (2006), Morgan *et al.* (2008) and Soltani *et al.* (2008), and indicates that at least in some cases and from some perspectives there may be tensions between the use of the concept of productivity at a macro-level, and its utility within actual work organisations.

Following this, the researcher investigates how different approaches to quality may influence the picture, based on Parasuraman *et al.*'s (1985) classification of the determinants of service quality, before formally drawing these elements together to show how the specific research question formulated around the usefulness of the concept of productivity in certain sectors relates to previous research. Of particular interest in this derivation are high contact sectors, where the intersubjective characteristics of customer-staff interaction can play an important role in quality.

The researcher then starts with the discussion of the nature of the link between training and productivity in service sectors.

### 3.2 TRAINING NEEDS AND PRODUCTIVITY

In service sector research, starting from the concept of productivity quickly leads to training needs, but the opposite is not true. Starting from the need for training does not necessarily lead to the concept of productivity. This asymmetrical relationship between productivity and training is of great interest.

For example, Kilic and Okumus (2005), researching productivity in hotels in Northern Cyprus, find that three of the seven most important factors of productivity were aspects of training, or education: staff training, multi-skill training programs and the training and qualifications of managers (2005: 323).

In direct contrast, Dewhurst *et al.* (2007) researching training needs in the tourism and hospitality sector in Telford and Shropshire, UK, find that training should provide a range of benefits such as, listing the top seven, customer satisfaction, improved quality, improved employee morale, improved profitability, improved teamwork, fulfilling legal requirements and improving profile/reputation (2007: 138). But, while certain aspects that may be associated with productivity are identified as potential benefits such as quality, profitability, reputation, waste reduction and competitiveness, productivity itself is not explicitly mentioned anywhere in the paper.

And this phenomenon seems quite common in the academic literature on service sector training needs. In a sample literature search for non-technical 'training needs' or 'need for training' in a single database (Business Source Premier) between 2005 and 2010 conducted in June 2010, of nine papers connected with identifiable service sectors only one mentioned 'productive' workers or 'productivity', the exception being

concerned with the timeshare industry (Hicks and Walker 2006). The papers that did not mention productivity were Dewhurst *et al.* (2007) (tourism and hospitality), Rivera *et al.* (2008) (restaurants), Deshpande and Lagarde (2008) (public health and social change), Burrow-Sanchez and Lopez (2009) (education), Shaw (2009) (event management), Engstrom *et al.* (2009) (social work), Lee *et al.* (2010) (restaurants) and Olivet *et al.* (2010) (addressing homelessness).

In contrast of the six papers returned that dealt with the production side of the economy (manufacturing and associated aspects of international trade and investment, and construction), 'productive' or 'productivity' or a specific productivity improvement tool such as total quality management were mentioned in all except one, the exception being concerned with disaster risk management in construction (Bosher *et al.* 2007). The papers mentioning training needs that also referred to the concept of productivity were Herron and Braiden (2006) (manufacturing), Heilmann (2007) (manufacturing, also other business services), Chi *et al.* (2008) (foreign direct investment), Canales *et al.* (2009) (construction) and Prestwich and Ho-Kim (2009) (international trade).

It might then be argued that Kilic and Okumus's use of the concept of productivity is an exceptional, isolated case in the recent literature on service sector training needs, but this is not entirely true. Shafti *et al.* (2007), for example, produce an extensive review of the literature on productivity in service sectors, before going on to identify particular associations between aspects of productivity management themes and what they term 'dimensions' of services. While not addressing the subject of training directly, two of the three theme aspects that have significant levels of positive association with a range of service dimensions are productivity improvement problems around the competence of people, and employee based productivity improvement approaches (2007: 723). Both

of these themes have a clear potential link into training and education, thus reinforcing the directional relationship from productivity to training needs.

Shafti *et al.*'s research is highly abstracted and it might be alternatively argued that the use of the word 'productivity' is an academically-driven meta-layer. In support of this argument, the terminology used to describe the aspects of the productivity management themes rarely makes use of the word 'productivity', and never where a positive association with a service dimension is found (2007: 723, 2<sup>nd</sup> column of table). In addition, the research is conducted with a number of experts as participants, rather than actors engaged with actual work practices within the sectors considered.

In summary, this analysis shows that, in contrast to research into the productive economy, there is not a natural link apparent in service sector research from discussion around training needs to discussion around productivity, and in addition where productivity is discussed this may be academically driven.

### 3.3 LATTICES OF ANALYSIS AND ACTORS' PRACTICES

A number of examples of what *appear* to be more immediate research into productivity within service organisations can be found, but these tend to show similar traits to those found when Shafti *et al.*'s research was closely examined. There tends to be little actual discussion of productivity with actors, a theme that the researcher has remarked on earlier but which is treated more explicitly here.

In the hotels and banking sectors, Keltner *et al.* (1999) explored constructed operational productivity measures across a number of countries, but it is not clear that the actors within the organisations who were interviewed themselves used the term productivity. Brown and Dev (2000) used productivity measures constructed from financial data around value added to research productivity within hotel chains in the USA, and again it is not

clear that these measures were themselves used by the organisations' actors. Van Looy *et al.* (1998) explored the development of a productivity scorecard in the health industry, by developing a series of productivity indicators (1998: 365 & 369-370), with the same caveat on actors' use of the term productivity; and when it is made clear that they were used (in a health insurance context), it was not necessarily to the benefit of the organisation (1998: 372).

In the retail sector, Jones *et al.* (2006) performed an econometric case study of productivity in Finland that combined financial data with survey responses on human resource aspects from employees; again, the term 'productivity' appears to have been externally applied, not internally emerging. In a similar study of wholesale in the UK, Griffith *et al.* (2006) linked a productivity measure constructed from financial data with internal company data termed management measures; the internally-generated management measures did not themselves use the term productivity (2006: 522).

These examples show that it is more common for productivity to be used as a lattice of analysis, than for it to emerge from actors' practices. Together with the evidence from the previous section that the concept of productivity does not generally seem to be a naturally emergent concept in the context of service sector training, they suggest that there may be a problem in linking an externally derived concept of productivity with actors' perspectives within an organisation. The next section investigates whether the research literature can throw any direct light on this possible inference.

### 3.4 PRODUCTIVITY AT THE MACRO AND AT THE ORGANISATIONAL LEVEL

Four pieces of qualitative research may be used to illustrate in different ways some of the difficulties experienced in linking productivity and associated concepts used at the macro political level or within academic

discussion with actors' voices in specific organisations. These four pieces of research are Pillay *et al.* (2003), Sambrook (2006), Morgan *et al.* (2008) and Soltani *et al.* (2008). These mirror and delineate some of Billett and Somerville's concerns around the distances that may arise between policy formulated in terms of 'abstracted societal goals' and individual workers' identities (2004: 321-322). Additional papers that support or reinforce the messages that the researcher has drawn from these four main pieces are Hsieh and Yen (2005), McCabe and Garavan (2008) and Meads *et al.* (2009).

Pillay *et al.* (2003) in their study of employee conceptions of learning and work in a transport organisation and a medical service organisation place their study within the macro-context of 'productivity and continuous education' (2003: 97); but the findings of the research into organisational actors' views do not anywhere mention 'productivity'. Pillay *et al.* cite productivity and continuous education as desirable outcomes, within a framework of 'new capitalism' (Gee *et al.* 1996 in Pillay *et al.* 2003: 95) and new work practices. But it is not specified whether the outcome of productivity is one expected at the macro-economic level, or further down the chain within particular organisations. And within the context of interviews with actors within the organisations, the language actually used within questions (in the examples given) is that of 'work', 'job', 'training' and 'learn[ing] . . . competences' (2003: 99).

Within the National Health Service (NHS) in Wales, Morgan *et al.* (2008) consider the difference between 'rhetoric and practice' of continuing professional development (CPD). They identify the concept of CPD with that of 'continuing education' (2008: 234). The rhetoric is that of CPD to 'transact organisational reform for the sake of greater efficiencies', located within a context of globalisation (2008: 236). The main policy reference used by Morgan *et al.* to characterise this concept is that of an NHS document entitled 'Agenda for Change', including the quoted rationale of:

This will allow jobs to be designed around patient and staff needs, improving overall productivity and the job satisfaction for staff (NHS Modernisation Agency 2003 in Morgan *et al.* 2008: 236).

But while productivity is clearly stated here as the central policy aim, the findings of the research exploring how CPD is actually implemented and practised amongst frontline clinical supervisors do not use the word productivity. Indeed, the central focus of the supervisors' work, as identified by participants, is that of 'patient care':

. . . at the end of the day it's the patient care that comes first . . .  
(Morgan *et al.* 2008: 242).

The centrality of 'patient care' to nurses is also emphasised by McCabe and Garavan (2008: 536).

And Morgan *et al.* go on to recommend that '[NHS] Trusts, professional bodies and government, in particular, need to critically consider whether the assumed gains underpinning the rhetoric of CPD are gains in actuality' (2008: 246). The central problem that Morgan *et al.* identify is not specifically that of language, but that of the tension caused by the ambiguity of purposes (managerial or professional) and responsibilities (personal or organisational) that surround CPD (2008: 233-234). But in addition to these tensions, there is perhaps a problem of language: that policy is couched in terms of 'productivity' while actors within the organisation talk about, for example, 'patient care'.

Again in the context of the NHS, Sambrook (2006) identifies the potential problem of language explicitly, though not in this case around the word productivity. Sambrook focuses on 'human resource development' (HRD), described by her as a 'discursive and social construction', and 'an important aspect to support modernisation and change' (2006: 49). In this support of the central policy of modernisation, the construct is situated in a role aligned with that of productivity in the previous example. Two of Sambrook's



conclusions are relevant here. Firstly, the term HRD was never used by senior managers from the NHS who participated in the research. This contributes to a problem of communication - in the words of one participant: 'I think we're using the same words but it means something completely different' (2006: 62).

The second relevant conclusion is that the discourse around HRD, already in this way compromised in its aim of developing meanings through shared understandings, presents tensions with and challenges to the maintenance of professional identity particularly for nurses (2006: 62). The concern around the language of 'learning and knowledge' is echoed by Meads *et al.* (2009: 68) also in the context of central policy and modernisation (2009: 67), and the two concerns of language and of professional identity are reiterated by McCabe and Garavan (2008: 561). Thus the language of the academic discourse of HRD is not found to resonate with organisational level actors in the NHS, and beyond this may be causing complexity in the way individuals negotiate and renegotiate their identities.

#### 3.4.1 An attempted implementation

The fourth and final example from the literature might be referred to as the exception that proves the rule. Soltani *et al.* (2008) look at three actual attempts to implement an explicit productivity improvement technique in three service organisations, that of total quality management (TQM), 'right first time and every time' (2008: 1399). Their research covered organisations from the hotels and restaurants, health and social care and communications sectors.

Contrasting findings were made between hotels and health on the one hand, and telecommunications on the other. In the telecommunications company, the senior management implementation of TQM had been successful in ensuring a focus on perceived service quality, backed up by successful strategies such as training (Soltani *et al.* 2008: 1410). In the

hotel and the hospital, however, the implementation of TQM was associated with a too simplistic interpretation of service quality, described as 'an operation's view to service quality', with resultant detrimental impacts on customer loyalty (2008: 1410-1411). Soltani *et al.* describe the implications of this approach as 'negative and harmful' (2008: 1410).

The authors do not in their conclusion explicitly discuss whether the different observed results of the implementation of TQM may be a consequence of differences in nature between the sectors, for example in the nature of the customer-organisation interaction and how service quality is ascertained, though in their introduction they had highlighted services as a demanding context for the implementation of TQM not least because of the 'challenges for designing and managing service quality' (2008: 1401, referencing Stevenson 2005).

But another piece of research looking at how anticipated productivity improvements are realised in practice, in this case through the process of customer participation, highlights the unpredictability of the customer-service provider interface in one of the sectors. Hsieh and Yen (2005), investigating the proposition that customer participation in service delivery can increase productivity in the context of restaurants, find that this does not happen because the increased complexity and unpredictability caused by involving customers more in the delivery process leads to higher job stress (2005: 899-902).

This therefore leaves the question open as to whether the difficulties experienced in the hotel and hospital in implementing TQM found by Soltani *et al.* may not be in fact inherent in the nature of the sector, in particular the perhaps unrealistic demands made on front line staff, in the critical but potentially volatile situation of directly interacting with customers, to get it right 'first time and every time'.

How would people, who have the dispositions and personalities suited to work well in flexible customer-service environments, react to the imposition of such an inflexible deficit-based framework such as TQM? Does it not privilege conscientiousness over the important customer-related emotional trait of openness to experience (see Ekinci and Dawes 2009)? And what effect would such a deficit model of behaviour have on how workers see themselves and their sense of identity?

The researcher has previously noted that the question of individual workers' identities in different sectors, and how these relate to and impact on the successful transformation of work practices, has been of concern to Billett and Somerville (2004). As Billett and Somerville might ask, is productivity a concept that entertains and motivates individual actors within service organisations?

In Pillay *et al.* (2003), Morgan *et al.* (2008) and Sambrook (2006) conjectural links are discussed between external constructs and organisations' effectiveness. But these links remain conjectural, and no mechanism linking the constructs to the decisions and actions of actors within the organisations are specified and delineated. In Soltano *et al.* (2008), there is an attempt to build an explicit link from an external construct to an organisation's activities through the implementation of a TQM system; but the link is found to be too simplistic in practice when attempted in the hotels and health sectors.

To the researcher, the strong picture that was painted here was that while measures of productivity can be constructed and the concept of productivity can be investigated within service organisations, this does not mean that productivity is a concept that naturally emerges from interactions or resonates with actors who are employed within service organisations, and in some circumstances may in fact be a concept that they find antagonistic to how they see themselves, their work and the things that constitute doing

their job well. Put simply, this line of inference and argument suggested that in some high contact service contexts current conceptions of productivity might be too simplistic and mechanistic to be useful.

Before going on to formulate this proposition into a formal research question, the researcher will present some examples of experience and credence properties, in order to be able to be more specific about the type of service context that it makes sense to investigate.

### 3.5 CREDENCE AND EXPERIENCE PROPERTIES

The researcher provides here some illustrative examples of credence and experience properties from the literature, in order to at least partially characterise the nature of the complexity that underlies service quality in many high contact contexts. The aim is to give insight into the types of service contexts in which it made sense to the researcher to investigate the applicability and utility of the concept of productivity for actors engaged in actual work practices.

An example of credence properties, that is properties that cannot be evaluated even after using a service, for example customer's beliefs concerning the competence of staff and the customer's safety and security when using the service (Parasuraman *et al.* 1985), is given by Beatson *et al.*, who find that in a travel context trust is central to the quality of the customer relationship (2008: 221). One dimension of this trust is the degree to which the customer perceives that a company 'is concerned about the welfare of its customers' (2008: 217).

Connected with the aspect of welfare, Li *et al.* (2009: 1768) classify six services according to their level of perceived risk: medical care and university education are deemed high risk, a hair salon and public transportation medium risk, and a department store and fast food low risk. However, Lee *et al.* (2010: 95) comment that food hygiene in restaurants is

crucial because of the risk to customers' health, which could 'ruin an entire franchise's reputation'. Ethical concerns also apply to serving alcohol (Pratten 2007) and consequent risks to public and individuals' health and safety.

Ardenghi *et al.* (2007), in investigating the development of mature ethical approaches amongst newly qualified dentists, show that the assessment of whether or not to treat a particular patient may be a difficult one, and applying the principle of protecting the patient from harm is not necessarily an easy one to put into practice in all cases (2007: 251). In investigating the impact of the internet on the consumer-professional relationship in healthcare in the UK and the USA, Laing *et al.* (2005: 686) highlight the importance of promoting trust, commitment and compliance in this relationship.

Turning to experience properties, examples of practical concerns are staff having an orientation towards service excellence, and the personality traits or dispositions of front line employees (see Ekinci and Dawes 2009: 505-506 for a discussion of personality traits), particularly the trait that gives employees sympathetic affect. These issues are expressed in four interrelated papers, Constanti and Gibbs (2005), Beatson *et al.* (2008), Ekinci and Dawes (2009) and Li *et al.* (2009).

These four draw on research into service organisations in the transport and travel sector, with the latter two also drawing on hotels and catering and other services (hairdressing) and Li *et al.* on the retail, health and social care and education sectors. As well as this link between personality and the positive (emotional) benefits of sympathetic affect, there also seems to be a link between identity and commitment in an emotional context, based on research amongst nurses (McCabe and Garavan 2008).

Both Ekinci and Dawes (2009: 517) and Li *et al.* (2009: 1775) distinguish between a cognitive/rational aspect of the relationship between customers and front line staff and an emotional/artful one, with Ekinci and Dawes using the word artful in connection with customer satisfaction (2009: 508, based on Fournier and Mick 1999). In Ekinci and Dawes, the rational aspect is represented by 'customer interaction quality' (2009: 517), and this construct has a degree of overlap with that of 'service orientation' in Beatson *et al.* (2008: 217). These cognitive approaches are about a commitment towards service excellence (2008: 213).

On the emotional aspect of the customer-employee interaction, Ekinci and Dawes identify the trait of 'openness to experience' as being crucial (2009: 517), characterising openness to experience as being able to provide 'better affective responses' (2009: 510). This openness to experience corresponds to Li *et al.*'s 'service attitude', defined as an 'internal passion for their job' enabling staff to serve customers 'with an affective attitude' (2009:1766).

The importance of emotional aspects of service employees' work is also drawn attention to in a different context by McCabe and Garavan (2008: 536). They find that nurses rate highly the importance of ' "holistic" patient care, involving the patient's emotional as well as their physical well being', and that this commitment is tied in with their professional identity (2008: 561).

A couple of research projects have looked at the role of emotional intelligence in contributing to performance of roles. These are Rego *et al.* (2010) investigating the connection between emotional intelligence and caring behaviour in nurses in Portugal, and Tsai (2009) investigating service behaviour in hotels in Taiwan. In both cases, use of emotions (self-encouragement) was found to be positively associated with the relevant behaviours (Rego *et al.* 2010: 1428, Tsai 2009: 1443).

However, for understanding the emotions of oneself and of other people, contrasting findings are reported. These two aspects were positively correlated with (positive) service behaviour in the hotels, but were not significant in relation to caring behaviour amongst nurses. The common characteristic seems to be that in both contexts it is important to maintain the ability to retain an emotional focus on oneself to sustain motivation towards doing a good job.

These examples of credence and experience properties show that in high contact services, there can be a great deal of complexity underlying the assessments of quality that customers or clients make. In many cases, these assessments are necessarily subjective as they depend on person-to-person *intersubjective* exchanges between the customer or client and the employees of the organisation providing the service.

### 3.6 FINALISING THE RESEARCH QUESTION

The researcher is now in a position to put forward what became the fundamental research question. While the concept of productivity is useful at a macro-economic level, is it in practice *useful* to actors within all service organisations?

‘Service organisations’ form a broad swathe of the economy, and from a practical standpoint it was necessary to narrow down the field of research. The researcher achieved this by focusing on organisations with particular characteristics, by choosing a particular concrete aspect of organisational management within which to investigate the concept of productivity, and by looking at a geographically concentrated population of organisations.

The researcher chose to look at organisations where service quality is subjectively determined. This was because service sector productivity is thought to be linked closely with quality (Blois 1984, Vuorinen *et al.* 1998, Parasuraman 2002); and a crucial aspect of quality within services is that it

may be subjectively determined by the customer (Chase 1978, Blois 1984), either in terms of the customer's perception of the experience of the service delivery (experience properties), or the customer's belief in his/her own security and the competence of the staff when making use of the service (credence properties) (Parasuraman *et al.* 1985).

The latent hypothesis here was that it might be particularly this subjective aspect of quality, and in turn how workers within such organisations see themselves and their work, which complicates the transfer of the concept of productivity from manufacturing to services.

The aspect of organisational management within which to investigate the usefulness of the concept of productivity was taken from Shafiti *et al.* (2007). Two of the aspects of productivity management themes that they identify as linking positively with particular service dimensions are linked mainly to dimensions which evidence a high degree of customer involvement with the service; these, then, the researcher argues are services where quality is likely to be subjectively determined. The two aspects, productivity improvement problems around the competence of people and employee based productivity improvement approaches, have a natural link to training and education.

The research therefore was planned to investigate the usefulness of the concept of productivity in the context of how training and education contribute to an organisation's effectiveness. Effectiveness is used here in a general sense to mean 'meeting the goals set for the organisation' (Vuorinen *et al.* 1998: 379, Blois 1984).

A further restriction of the area of research was the geographical range. The purpose of applying this restriction was firstly to control to a degree the variation in culture within which the field settings might occur; for example, different parts of a country might use different variations in industrial and



economic language depending on the local economic history. A geographically restricted population was therefore more likely to produce coherent results, though at the risk of less generalisability. The second aim was to help manage the costs and time involved in undertaking the field research. The area selected was Nottingham, where the researcher lived and worked.

The final version of the research question therefore became:

Is productivity a useful concept for actors within Nottingham service organisations where service quality is subjectively determined when considering the contribution of training and education to the organisation's effectiveness?

The literature review has focused primarily on service sector productivity, but the research question did also involve the contribution of training and education to organisational effectiveness. This is a large field, and so has not been covered extensively in the literature review in order to avoid the review becoming too wide-ranging and hence losing focus.

In order to ensure a firm connection of this aspect of the enquiry to previous research, during the development of the planned research methodology the researcher did in fact use the findings from a sample of papers on practical research into training and education in relevant service sectors to inform the topic structure of his chosen research instrument. This literature is covered in the researcher's ethnographic presentation of the planned method, and it is to a general consideration of the appropriate research methodology, starting with his earliest approaches, that the researcher now turns.

## *Chapter 4*

# Early methodological approaches

### 4.1 AN ETHNOGRAPHIC INTRODUCTION

The overall aim of this thesis is not to discuss the topic of service sector productivity *per se*, but to describe the research process as it was applied to investigating the topic, through an auto-ethnographic account. The lived process will therefore be to the point.

In contrast, in the interests of comprehensibility, so that the reader could the more easily gain an understanding of roots of the complex topic of service sector productivity, the literature review has presented a clear reasoned derivation of the research question from the research literature on service productivity, the question being:

Is productivity a useful concept for actors within Nottingham service organisations where service quality is subjectively determined when considering the contribution of training and education to the organisation's effectiveness?

Although the framework of historical development through which the literature review has been presented does in fact correspond to the main cognitive frame through which the researcher brought meaning and coherence to the research literature on service sector productivity that he read, in practice the actual lived process of derivation did not happen in such a clean, structured way as might be suggested through the previous chapters.

The purpose here now is to give an account of research as praxis and social change, an actual empirical example of how researchers and

participants can through the research process impact on the world through the medium of developed and transformed subjectivities (Cho and Trent 2006: 332), in this case the subjectivity of the researcher. Denzin considers that qualitative enquiry should use a 'performative model', enacting a 'performance ethic' (2009: 140), and the performativity of social science research is of interest here. This thesis provides a documented ethnographic case study of how in one particular example this performativity came about through the development of a subjectivity

The research question set out at the head of this chapter was not the original research question. The original research question was focused on an investigation of the understanding that employees of sector skills councils had of employers' views on productivity, innovation and learning in particular service sectors. One of the set tasks of sector skills councils was to increase productivity through improving skills. The particular service sectors that the researcher was interested in would, it was anticipated, be those where the potential link between skills and productivity was likely to be most problematic.

There are then three particular aspects of difference between the original research question and the developed research question. These are firstly that the research population is different. Originally, the population consisted of employees of sector skills councils and their understanding of the views of employers; the researcher found it expedient to switch to a more direct method, directly researching the views of employees of organisations within the relevant sectors.

The second change is the specification of which service sectors would be of interest, which became respecified in terms of the quality characteristics of the sector. The third change is that the initial focus was on how the concept of productivity was understood in the sectors of interest, the meanings that 'productivity' took on there. By the time of the developed research

question, this focus had shifted subtly from the meaning of productivity, which presupposes that the concept of productivity is in some way used in order for it to have a meaning, to whether the concept was *useful*, which makes no such presupposition.

The ways in which two of these three aspects were developed through the early methodological approaches used by the researcher form the main topic of this chapter. These are presented in the form of *episodes of reflection*, as it was in this way that the researcher experienced them. These two episodes of reflection are concerned one with a trial interview with an employee of a sector skills council undertaken very early on, and two with how best to decide the sectors of interest. The reflections that lay behind the third aspect of development, to the focus on the usefulness of the concept of productivity, will be picked up in the next chapter.

These episodes of reflection were instrumental in leading the researcher to the planned method of research based on a series of semi-structured interviews with employees, ‘actors engaged in actual work practices’, of service sector organisations, to be analysed using thematic analysis, which forms the subject of the next chapter. In the planning of the planned method, the method of deciding the sectors of interest was further changed, though this change drew on the eventual outcomes of the original ‘episode of reflection’ concerned with the method of selecting the sectors.

Also of importance in going forward were particular *points of clarity or resolution*. Two of these are covered in this chapter. These two points of clarity or resolution both concern the sub-strand of quantitative analysis that was designed to be the original method of sector selection. This sub-strand does not form part of the main methodology of the thesis, but nevertheless represents an important separate process that continued on during the research period, and which re-emerged as relevant to this thesis after the main investigations had been completed.

In the event, and due to the experience of the first interview using the eventual planned methodology of interviews with employees of service sector organisations rather than sector skills councils, together with the researcher's subsequent intense reflection, the method of analysis and in consequence the methodological approach was significantly changed. This substantial process of reflection and change is covered in the third methodological chapter, Chapter 6. The intense reflection also drew on the episode of reflection on the trial interview presented in this chapter.

In the researcher's mind, this first interview (i.e. the first interview with an actor in a relevant service sector, not the trial interview with an employee of a sector skills council) takes the form of an *incident*, a happening, an event, very specific in place and time and involving externalities. This perception is quite different from the episodes of reflection which are about reflecting back on things that have happened previously and becoming aware of patterns that have been subconsciously evolved and emerge into consciousness during these episodes.

In contrast to the incident, the researcher does not strongly externally associate the 'episodes of reflection'. They are not remembered by the researcher as having happened in particular times and places, though of course they did - with the caveat though that an episode might in fact be a composite of separate episodes of reflection retrospectively perceived as one because of the conceptually derived sense of fitting together that the composite takes on.

As well as these episodes of reflection, points of clarity or resolution, and incident that stand out, a number of encounters - chance conversations - also contributed to the patina of the researcher's developing subjectivity.

## 4.2 A SIMPLE VIEW OF THE TRANSITION

For the reader, a frame for understanding the overall process may be helpful. The development of the subjectivity that is under discussion may be considered as a process from an idea, that of potential difficulties in some service sectors of increasing productivity through improving skills; to a *possible* hypothesis, that the concept of productivity is not equivalent in all sectors, and that in some sectors the concept of productivity might not in fact be a useful construct; to a subjectivity, perhaps an instrument of enactment or an agent of performativity, though the difference that the researcher means between the terms 'possible hypothesis' and 'subjectivity' will be explored more fully in a later chapter.

The idea stage is then the stage of the early methodological approaches; the 'possible hypothesis' stage broadly corresponds to the planned approach; and the developed or developing subjectivity corresponds to the actual process, in the event, of the incident, analysis, interpretation and consequential performed actions that occurred, were participated in or that were performed.

The overall methodological approach is that of ethnography, a description of the researcher progressing through these three stages, and his reporting of his retrospective appreciation of significant aspects; within this layered methodology, the methodological chapters also contain accounts of specific methodologies, such as regression analysis (in passing), semi-structured interviews, thematic analysis and conversation analysis, that have at one time or other been planned or used.

## 4.3 A NOTE ON ETHNOGRAPHIC MATERIALS

While the overall approach is ethnographic, this approach has been retrospectively applied. The researcher did not keep a continuous reflective research diary. The contemporaneously generated materials that are available consist of a small amount of reflective materials from research

diaries kept from time to time, a complete set of thesis versions and notes spanning the whole research period, emails including reflective emails to the researcher's supervisor, doctorate progress reports, submissions to journals and comments by reviewers on submitted materials, and interview transcripts of the trial interview and the first planned interview.

This documentary evidence, which can provide a fairly accurate timeline, is complemented by the researcher's memories which are the main source of reflective aspects. That is, the researcher has memories of the interviews, and of having had conversations, contemporaneous thoughts and periods and episodes of reflection with varying amounts of accompanying external contextual detail, though these memories are subject to evolving selection and distortion over time.

#### 4.4 REFLECTIONS ON THE TRIAL INTERVIEW

Turning now to the first report of an episode of reflection, the trial interview was conducted shortly after the start of the programme of research, at a stage when relatively little of the literature review had been conducted. The interview was with an employee of the sector skills council for the retail sector.

The researcher had created a set of topics, and the interview covered all the topics in a way that the researcher considered was fruitful. As the researcher went through the transcription process, and read further about productivity in a range of service sectors, various thoughts began to crystallise in his mind around analysis.

The essence of the problem, in the researcher's mind, came to be as follows. The employee of the retail sector skills council had worked previously in logistics. It would then be reasonable to expect that she would bring some ideas and insights from her work in the logistics sector into her work in the retail sector.

If at the time of analysis, an issue around differences in approaches to productivity by employers in different sectors became important, then it would be important analytically to source views to those working in a specific sector.

In the case of the trial interview, this would throw up a particular problem. Analytically, the researcher would need to ascertain whether views that had been expressed by the research participant reflected views of employers in the retail sector, or whether they reflected her more general experience, which might then include views sourceable to work practices in the logistics sector.

And this reflection also pinpointed a weakness of the overall approach. If the aim was to understand *employers'* views on productivity, then while it might be legitimate to report how an employee of a sector skills council saw those views, it would again be analytically important to understand in each case the basis of each report by a research respondent. Was statement 'x' made by a respondent as his/her understanding of employers' views on productivity, or was statement 'x' made by a respondent on the basis of *his/her own* understandings of how productivity and approaches to productivity should go forward in the sector.

The crucial point came when the researcher imagined the organised warp and weft of the interview transcripts unravelling and fraying into a tangle of individual fibres, with the apparent homogeneity of perspective of the trial and possible subsequent interviews differentiating under close examination into a number of separate strands of different and possibly undetermined provenance.

This analytic problem of statements taken at one removed seemed, in the researcher's mind, to present really fundamental problems for thematic analysis of a series of interviews with employees of different sector skills



councils. If a common theme emerged, to what extent would the researcher be able to say that the theme represented actual common approaches taken by employers in different sectors, rather than say a construct created by the commonality of working for organisations such as sector skills councils?

If differences between sectors emerged, to what extent would the researcher be able to reliably trace these differences to differences in the views of *employers* in different sectors, rather than say the different modes of reporting employed at different times by a respondent in an interview. That is, at one stage a respondent might be reporting the actual views expressed by employers, at another his/her interpretation or assumption about how employers thought, and at another their own views of how work in the sector was or should be carried out in actuality or ideally. Furthermore, it would be unclear in many cases for one particular statement whether this was representative of say all employers, some employers or just one employer, or indeed for some sections of staff (e.g. frontline or senior management).

It became apparent to the researcher that the implication was that at each point in any future interview the researcher would need to be clear at the time, whether a respondent's statement represented employers' views or their own views, and in what way. Such a need could well render the interview inoperable as a social encounter if it required repeated forensic questioning by the researcher.

This episode also presented the researcher with some immediacy of understandings of, or thinkings about, how the latent assumption in thematic analysis, that there was a common basis on which different interviews could be compared, could become patent as a significant flaw at the analytic stage, a resource that would be useful in the researcher's

extended reflections after the first interview of the eventual planned methodology; a topic to which the researcher will return in Chapter 6.

#### 4.5 REFLECTIONS ON IDENTIFYING THE SECTORS OF INTEREST

At around this time, after the transcription of the trial interview, and the beginning of negotiations towards a second interview under the original sector skills council-based methodology, and the associated reflections on the trial interview, the researcher began to focus more closely on a sound way of identifying the service sectors that would be of most interest for investigating potential difficulties between increasing productivity and improving skills.

To understand the researcher's state of mind at this time, it is perhaps worth considering the question, 'what is productivity?'

As has been shown in the previous two chapters productivity is a term used in the research literature with many meanings, with more or less definition and more or less technical usage, and sometimes as a seemingly technical usage without any definition given at all. In addition, it can be used in general, that is in non-research usage, either as 'productivity' or more commonly, and perhaps with a slightly different though not disjoint meaning, in the form of the associated adjective 'productive'. So, something might be thought productive or good for productivity in a general way.

Though these two different forms have different connotations, it is in the researcher's view difficult to separate out completely the one from the other. The Oxford English Dictionary gives two main definitions of 'productivity':

1. The state or quality of being productive
2. Econ. The effectiveness of productive effort, especially in industry, as measured in terms of the rate of output (of goods,

products, etc.) per unit of input (of labour, materials, equipment, etc.). Also in extended use.

The first usage is given as equivalent to productiveness, which is defined as 'the quality of being productive; capacity to produce; abundance or richness of output; fertility, fruitfulness, productivity.' Leaving aside technical economic definitions, these more general connotations are strongly positive - abundance, richness, fertility, fruitfulness.

Furthermore, the researcher was becoming aware that within the research literature there was often an *unstated* assumption that increasing productivity is a good thing.

These positive connotations and the unstatedness of assumptions were contrasted by the existence of some quantitative research using economic data that showed productivity does not always present the same characteristics in every sector, for example Jagger *et al.* (2005).

This mental context provided the backdrop to the second important episode of reflection presented in this ethnographic account, as follows.

Critical to the success of this research project was the identification of the sectors where issues around increasing productivity were most likely to be problematic. It occurred to the researcher that taking a quantitative approach using economic data might be a good way to circumvent the problem of the relatively uncritical approach in the research literature to the question of whether increasing productivity is good or bad in a particular sector or industry.

Essentially, the idea was that if increasing productivity is good in some sectors but not good, or at least problematic, in other sectors, then this implies that the quantitative characteristics of productivity, using some definition, would be unlikely to be the same in all sectors.

By good chance, at around this time in autumn 2008 the researcher became aware, through the November 2008 edition of the Economic & Labour Market Review published by the UK's Office for National Statistics, of the EU KLEMS productivity database that had been released in March 2008. This was a more sophisticated successor database to that used by Jagger *et al.* which was publicly available (through funding by the European Commission) and so easily accessible. This ease of accessibility was relevant because the researcher would not need to make an a priori case or justification for its use in an exploratory or innovative way.

In this second reported episode of reflection, the researcher envisioned building on Jagger *et al.*'s work by using the EU KLEMS database for running a number of regressions that could be used to identify the various *quantitative* characteristics of productivity in different sectors, based on economic data which is essentially behavioural, as opposed to the more common types of social science data which, whether quantitative or qualitative, tend to be discursive in nature.

This approach, so the researcher perceived, had the benefit of both addressing the issue of the unstatedness of the assumption that productivity is everywhere relevant, as it looks explicitly at this question, and also sidelining through the use of behavioural data the issue of the positive connotations of the word 'productivity' which could present problems in a discursive enquiry in relation to identifying sectors where in fact the impact of the concept of productivity might be negative.

The memory that the researcher has of 'envisioning' in his mind this episode of reflection is somewhat different in nature to that of the image of the unravelling cloth which encapsulated the crisis (critical point) of his reflection in the first episode that has been discussed.

In this case, the researcher 'saw' that with a series of economic data available by sector, some overall financial response function could be regressed against various series, and the regression lines, or response curves, in sectors where productivity is an important concept might show up different responses for some particular economic variables from those responses evident in other sectors where productivity might not be so relevant. The mental picture consisted of visually imagining alternate response curves in graphical form.

This picture came together with, and was mentally situated within, a *non-visual* almost tactile sensing that these sets of responses would be repeated over a number of dimensions, with these dimensions corresponding to different aspects of the empirical economic data to which the overall financial response function would be allowed (conceptually within the context of the analysis) to have differing responses in different sectors. The sets of responses, taken together in their variability, could then be characterised as an expression of the concept of productivity; and through such an analytic procedure the quantitative characteristics of productivity across different sectors could be examined.

Though this description takes a lot of words, the mathematical and statistical relationships that the words are used to describe, or rather allude to, are a practised and direct way of thought for the researcher.

#### 4.6 TWO POINTS OF CLARITY

The result of this second episode of reflection was significant. The researcher did indeed go on to fit a series of regressions using the EU KLEMS database. This quantitative analysis does not form a major part of the methodology of this thesis, but the results of the analysis do weave themselves back in in the later stages.

It is therefore appropriate to outline briefly how this sub-strand progressed, in order to prepare the reader for the later re-introduction of the outcomes during the discussion chapter. This outline will also serve to highlight two *points of clarity or resolution* that contributed significantly to developments.

The first point of clarity happened at the outset of the quantitative analysis, and was concerned with how to conceptually structure the whole approach of fitting a series of regressions.

In the researcher's mind he realised that he could proceed by setting up a very simple null hypothesis to test, that the quantitative characteristics of productivity are the same in all sectors.

If this null hypothesis then failed against more complex alternative hypotheses, then one or more of the alternative hypotheses might well throw up criteria that the researcher could use to identify the sectors that might be of particular interest to this research project.

The failure of the null hypothesis would also begin to get at the whole unstatedness of the assumption on productivity, that it is a concept that is everywhere valent. It might also show that in some sectors the response function had negative responses to increases in productivity, indicating that in some areas of the economy increased productivity could be a bad thing.

This then was the way that the linear regression analysis of the EU KLEMS productivity database was formally structured from the outset. In the event, the analysis proved far more complex than imagined, taking about a year, and would by itself have constituted a thesis. An important juncture in the self-understanding of this analysis was the presentation of early results at the Doctorate Teaching Day in November 2009 at the Centre for Labour Market Studies.

For this event, the researcher prepared a presentation entitled 'A productivity kaleidoscope' which used the metaphors of 'chameleon' and 'kaleidoscope' to visualise and communicate his understandings. Chameleon was used to explain the researcher's perception of how the meaning of productivity changes to suit its local context; and kaleidoscope referred to the overall impression that is created, when all these separate local meanings are collected together into a single whole without riding over the differences.

The researcher presented an actual visualisation of this effect through a simulated three dimensional chart of three productivity-related sector factors that had emerged after dimension reduction from the analysis. This chart was presented in the form of an animation, in which the chart was seen to rotate around its axes, giving the audience the experience of viewing for themselves the complex world of productivity from different perspectives.

In the presentation, the researcher also raised a concern around specificity that might affect his ability to proceed with the original research question. That is, the quantitative analysis was based on very specific economic data, with a large data collection apparatus designed to ensure that each piece of data is allocated to very definite sectors and variables. It is, in this way, focused not blurred.

This contrasted in the researcher's mind, based on his experience from the trial interview, that in comparison there might be considerable ambiguities around interpreting and allocating the relevance of data emerging from further interviews with employees from sector skills councils, and this contrast could be a source of tension in future interviews.

At this point, then, the researcher had in his mind that his course of action would be to write his thesis around the quantitative analysis. However, the

researcher's supervisor pointed out, some time around Christmas 2009, that a thesis based solely around quantitative analysis of essentially economic data could not be considered social science.

This comment together with the implication of the reflection on the viability of analytically comparing interviews from employees of different sector skills councils meant that the researcher had to rethink his whole approach. This led to the planned approach which is set out in the next chapter.

But before creating this new approach, the researcher saw very clearly that he would need to write up in a finished format the work conducted on the linear regression analysis. In this point of clarity and resolution, the researcher intuited that if he did not, his mind would be continually returning to any unresolved issues within the analysis as a probably uncontrollable recourse for his frustration in having to start again, and that by preparing such a write-up he could indeed resolve any unresolved issues and then effectively progress.

Accordingly, in spring 2010 the researcher wrote an article on the linear regression analysis for an academic journal specialising in productivity, which was submitted in May 2010. The researcher was not to receive any feedback from the journal until mid-February 2011, that is until after a major part of the data collection, analysis and interpretation for this thesis had been completed.

This write-up and submission gave the provisional closure needed, and the researcher then turned to reformulating his methodological approach. At this point, and particularly through his quantitative analytical investigations, the researcher was now beginning to understand just how complex the question of productivity was, if considered as a concept that could hold the same definition for every part of the economy, rather than a chameleon concept that might be conveniently redefined to suit the needs of a local



context, and as such being little different from a general idea of ‘economic goodness’.

These latent understandings were taken forward into the next stage of reformulating his approach to create the planned methodology, which forms the subject of the next chapter. The *explicit* articulation and expression of the complexity of service sector productivity and its associated research did not though come about until undertaking the first revision of a second submitted paper.

## *Chapter 5*

# An account of the planned method of enquiry

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

Building on the early methodological approaches and the associated reflection and decision-making, the key elements of which have been set out in the previous chapter, the initial research question underwent significant change in three areas. After outlining the eventual planned method of enquiry, this chapter discusses in detail from an ethnographic perspective how these three changes came about and thus how the research question, to which the planned method was a possible route to an answer, became constituted.

The chapter also covers the important and significant question of the researcher's epistemological and ontological position, and includes towards the end a review section on a sample of reading conducted in topic-preparation for the planned interviews which proved an important resource for subsequent developments and with which the reader will therefore, to understand these subsequent methodological developments, need to be at least to a degree familiar.

Returning to the changes to the initial research question, in summary the researcher first switched the research population from employees of sector skills councils to a more direct study of actors in organisations in the service sectors of interest. The second change centred the basis of identifying these sectors of interest on the quality characteristics of the sector. In the third significant change, the researcher refocused the topic of enquiry from the meaning of the concept of productivity to the *usefulness* of the concept (in the sectors of interest).

The episodes of reflection and points of clarity and resolution, as were discussed in the previous chapter, formed a starting point for going forward. This chapter takes the story on from this starting point, highlighting the main processes that resulted in the eventual planned method of research. The point can be located in a time sense to spring 2010, after the researcher had cleared his head through the journal submission of the linear regression analysis of the EU KLEMS database.

An important extra development that had happened by this time was that the researcher had become habituated to thinking about the concept of productivity in service sectors in terms of the structure of analysis that he had used for the linear regressions. The substantive part of this chapter then starts with an account of how this habituated way of thinking combined with the resources provided by the episodes of reflection and points of clarity and resolution already discussed led the researcher to develop the revised research question and the associated planned method of research.

This process lasted around six months, and during this time the researcher also developed a *possible hypothesis*, that the concept of productivity might *not* be useful in service sectors where quality is subjectively determined.

The account is structured into first a consideration of the switch of research population; secondly, the method of determining the sectors of interest; and thirdly the move towards an enquiry into the usefulness rather than the meaning of the concept of productivity, together with the ‘emergence’ of the possible hypothesis. The interesting ethnographic features of the first two elements consist of points of clarity or resolution that originated from the researcher’s experience of the regression analysis, and which also drew on the episodes of reflection covered in the previous chapter. The third element is of particular interest because it highlights the importance of the research continuum, and the way modes of thought can become habitual within it.

The main points of clarity that will be discussed were, in regard to the switch in research population, that directly accessing employees of companies in the service sectors themselves could by-pass many of the anticipated problems with thematic analysis of interviews with employees of employer-representative bodies; and with regard to selecting the sectors of interest, that specifying the criterion of selection in terms of the quality characteristics of a sector could build a feasible link to the existing research literature. An additional point of clarity also occurred when considering quality characteristics, that it is perhaps the intersubjective nature of customer-staff interaction that plays a particular complicating role in some sectors, making quality more subjective and difficult to measure.

The chapter finishes with a section on the researcher's preparation for the planned interviews which included reading a sample of recent papers on the topic of training and education issues in the sectors under study. While the fine texture of this review is not ethnographic, it is included here in some detail for three reasons. Firstly, being focused on the topic of training and education rather than productivity, it does not easily sit in the literature review. Secondly, as it was part of the process of developing and taking to implementation the planned research method it fits naturally from that point of view in this chapter.

Thirdly and most significantly, this sample of papers came to be an important resource for the period of intense reflection and change in methodology that followed the first planned interview, which forms the subject of the next chapter, and so the relatively undigested detail included in this review is in fact a representation to the reader of some of the contributory elements that formed the researcher's mental context during that period of intense reflection. The researcher suggests that rather than reading straight through it, the reader also uses this section as a resource, accessing it as s/he desires to understand the researcher's context of

reflection. This section will also be referred to as a resource in the chapter on research performativity.

However, before proceeding to his account of the development of the planned method of research through the further development of the research question, the researcher will set out his ontological and epistemological position followed by an outline of the eventual planned method. The outline will also include consideration of some contributory decisions that were important, but that were not so fundamental as to warrant a place in the thick ethnographic account that follows.

These elements are placed first so that the reader may be clear as s/he reads the account both where the account is headed and on what philosophical basis the research question and the associated research method have been constructed. The researcher hopes that putting these elements first will help the reader relate to and assimilate the account more easily.

## 5.2 ONTOLOGY AND EPISTEMOLOGY

The researcher considered and developed the planned approach to this research using a critical realist layered ontology of the real, the actual and the empirical (Saver 2000:11). The concept of productivity as it is used by an individual for thought and communication lies within the actual, and can be empirically observed at least to the extent of asking people whether they use it and what it means to them. This personal meaning may of course not be the same as the system or potentiality that is hypothesised to exist in the domain of the real that the concept is used to denote when used as a macro-level concept.

The review of the research literature has shown that there is reason to believe that both rational/cognitive and emotional considerations are relevant when considering the interaction between the customer and front

line employees in some service sectors. Both these aspects therefore are or may be of legitimate concern to both front line employees and managers in these sectors, and this had an impact on the nature of the enquiry the researcher was undertaking.

While it may be *assumed* that the deep reality of productivity is empirically observable in all service industries just as it seems to be in manufacturing, this remains an assumption. Productivity may even be actual in service industries; but that would not make it necessarily empirical. In manufacturing, it is possible to count the hours of labour etc. required to make a specified number of things. These are routinely observable, behaviourally, and indeed quantifiable. In contrast, the emotional reaction or affect of a customer within and after a service encounter is not so easily observable or quantifiable.

The aim of this research was thus not to assess whether the deep reality of productivity is actual within the service industries that have been chosen. The aim rather was to assess whether its conscious *use* as a concept is actual, and if so in what way. This potentially can be assessed through discursive methods. The use of the concept of productivity by actors involves their interpretation of its meaning, which in turn involves both denotations and connotations. Because emotional aspects of interactions between people, the customer and front line staff, can be central to the sectors under study, connotations may be particularly important. There is thus a very strong interpretative aspect to this research, as meaning is constitutive of as well as descriptive of social interactions (Saver 2000:17).

But there are drawbacks with the realist approach. As the researcher developed his analytic method in the light of events towards a closer examination of the interactive, co-constructive aspects of interviewing, as will be seen in the next chapter, these drawbacks became more prominent.

### 5.2.1 Towards constructionism

In an interview, one participant's empirical world including her/his thoughts, perceptions and intentions is part of the other participant's external actual world, not directly observable. The intersubjective nature of conversation, though, means that the interpretation of what the other participants' thoughts, perceptions and intentions are is central to how conversations go forward, and the work that is done within them. This intersubjectivity is a result of the interplay between the empirical and actual, and the common assumption that other participants are operating in a mirror world of the participant's own perspective.

Such instability in the application of the 'layerability' assumption that sits at the heart of the realist outlook presents, as the researcher found, increasing problems in analysis. A realist means of analysis may be constructed that looks good, but the awkward philosophical fit means that ensuring comprehensiveness is difficult, and simple points and issues may be overlooked.

As the method of analysis developed, the philosophical stance that the method of analysis demanded veered towards a more constructionist, possibly postmodern approach. In particular, the consideration of multiple subjectivities presented by an individual together with the use of membership categorisation device analysis would both sit more naturally within a constructionist or postmodern viewpoint. The reader will see that both of these come to play a significant role in the eventual analytic method, and the subsequent discussions.

A constructionist outlook easily accommodates membership categorisation device analysis. In discussing membership categorisation device analysis, Baker (2004) emphasises the active role of the interviewer, describing how questions 'shape how and as a member of which categories the respondents should speak' (2004: 163), that is which subjectivity (of many

possible) a respondent should demonstrate. Talk, in Baker's words, is 'social action: people achieve identities, realities, social order and social relationships through talk' (2004: 164).

In discussing membership categorisation devices, Baker refers to Sacks who defines them as the allocation of individuals to categories that are 'inference-rich' and 'representative' (Sacks 1992a: 41), and Sacks considers them a 'basic mechanism of social control' (Sacks 1992a: 48). In particular, Sacks speculates that two-set classes, such as 'haves and don't haves', may have a special role to play (Sacks 1992a: 48), and on the same theme Baker highlights the importance of identifying 'contrast pairs' during 'membership categorization device analysis of interview talk' (Baker 2004: 174). Baker also notes that categories may be explicit or alluded to, and categories are linked with ways of acting (Baker 2004: 174; also Sacks 1992a: 42 on categories and social actions).

Baker also talks about membership categorisation device analysis being the search for 'how *participants in the interview* make use of the resources of membership categorization' (Baker 2004: 174, italics in the original). And more generally concerning a constructionist perspective, Roulston describes researchers as producing 'analyses of how the interviewer and interviewee made sense of the research topic and constructed narratives' (2010: 60).

This perspective, of how together the interviewer and interviewee may work to come to a shared sense of the meaning of the topic under discussion, will be critical to the eventual analytic method that was used by the researcher. And in particular, this shared sense may be a *newly constructed*, context-emergent meaning.

And, in talking of personal identities as Baker does, is this one identity for an individual, or more? The postmodern question of 'multiple and



fragmented “selves” or a ‘unified self’ (Roulston 2010: 64) is also relevant to this thesis. As the researcher sees a new subjectivity develop within himself over the course of this research project, to what extent can a unified sense of self be maintained?

In the postmodern perspective of interviewing, the ‘subject behind the respondent’ and the ‘subject behind the interviewer’ are significant (Gubrium and Holstein 2003). Gubrium and Holstein discuss these issues in the following terms:

. . . imagine what the acknowledgement of multiple subjectivities does to the concept of sample size . . . Treating subject positions and their associate voices seriously, we might find that an ostensibly single interview could actually be, in practice, an interview with several subjects, whose particular identities may be only partially clear (Gubrium and Holstein 2003: 41)

In this paragraph, Gubrium and Holstein use a number of terms - subjectivity, subject, subject position, identity - to refer to what appear to be the same or very similar entities. Given this choice, the researcher has used the term ‘subjectivity’, as ‘subject’ already has a range of fairly common meanings in various fields.

Membership categorisation and subjectivities can be inter-related features. The surrounding passages in Gubrium and Holstein make clear that self-categorisation (‘as a woman’, ‘as a father’) is a powerful device for invoking alternative subjectivities or subject positions.

Another example of multiple subjectivities is given by Heaven *et al.* (2006) who discuss at length the different ‘trial identities’ that participants in a clinical randomised controlled trial take on, such as ‘patient’ or ‘volunteer’ (2006: 266) and the effect that this has on their participation. One such effect was the degree to which the participants perceived the clinical evidence presented to them during the trial as ‘personally relevant’.

They also noted that the trial identity of a particular respondent might shift during the course of the trial (2006: 267).

If individuals are actors, then subjectivities are analogous to the personae that actors take on for a particular performance. The process of choosing and selecting membership categories to bring into play at any particular point, in for example a conversation, is intertwined with the subjectivity that the actor is choosing to, or perhaps being pressured to, present at that particular juncture.

That the presentation of different subjectivities can indeed change the direction of a conversation, and the acts that it effects, means, in the researcher's view, that though the attempt can be made to overlay a constructionist outlook onto a realist ontology there are difficulties. There is deep tension between the two outlooks, at least in the researcher's mind, and this tension will play out through the analysis, interpretation and discussion in later chapters.

### 5.3 AN OUTLINE OF THE PLANNED METHOD OF RESEARCH

With this initially realist ontology and epistemology, the researcher eventually chose the common qualitative, discursive approach of a series of interviews as the planned method of collecting empirical evidence. These interviews would be with actors employed in organisations operating in the service sectors of interest. The planned method of analysis was thematic analysis, which would give a broad, composite picture of actors' views, with detail and variation as appropriate.

On the choice between semi-structured and unstructured interviews, a certain degree of structure emerged naturally from the structure of the research question. It would be important to understand, in each setting, who was the customer of the organisation, whether service quality was indeed subjectively determined, what were the goals that related to the

organisation's effectiveness, and to at least some degree how training and education contributed to achieving these goals. These might be termed 'fairly specific topics' and to this extent a semi-structured approach would be appropriate (Bryman 2004: 321). A similar approach was taken by Pillay *et al.* (2003), who used semi-structured interviews as a means of investigating the dual conceptions of learning and work, analogous to the investigation here of the dual conceptions of 'training and education' and 'productivity'.

These topics, however, did not constitute the primary aim of the interviews, merely the subject context or pretext within which that aim could be achieved. The primary aim was to capture, as they arose, any uses of the term 'productivity' by the participant, and if such uses did not naturally arise, to ask specific questions on this topic at the end of the interview. This aspect of the interviews would be essentially participant driven, and therefore represented an unstructured layer sitting within the semi-structured framework.

Spontaneous referrals to the concept of productivity by the participant would be treated by the researcher more as conversations, with the researcher 'simply responding to points that seem worthy of being followed up' (Bryman 2004: 320). This aspect corresponds to Pillay *et al.*'s (2003: 99) use of open questions to stimulate dialogue, but employing a somewhat more flexible format because the point at which the opportunity to investigate the participant's view of productivity arose would depend on the participant's in situ responses.

In summary, the planned method to collect empirical data on how actors within service sector organisations use the concept of productivity in considering the contribution of training and education to the organisation's effectiveness would, it was planned, be the discursive, fully interactive flexible technique of face-to-face semi-structured interviews to create the

subject context, with a more unstructured approach taken to capture and follow up any spontaneous references to 'productivity' in a more conversational participant-led style.

The target population was defined as Nottingham organisations with more than ten employees in the sectors of transport, hotels and catering, and health and social work. Nottingham was selected because it is the area in which the researcher lives and works, and this would reduce costs and time. The target population was operationalised by means of a commercial database, yielding a population of just under 500, from which request letters for interviews could be sent out. The target interviewee in each organisation would be the manager responsible for recruitment and training.

With this outline of the eventual research question and planned method of enquiry in view, the researcher now returns to the ethnographic account of how he came to revise and develop these in their final form.

#### 5.4 THE SWITCH IN THE RESEARCH POPULATION

Emerging from the long drawn out quantitative analysis, the researcher now had to rethink his whole approach. The regression analysis had shown implicitly just how complex the whole issue of productivity could be. The experience brought to a head the researcher's earlier reflections on the potential complexities of trying to cross-compare thematically interviews with employees of sector skills councils on what they thought employers' views on productivity might be, making an alternative solution more urgent. In addition, it was becoming apparent that there might be too few sectors of interest to make up a viable research population, composed as it would be of just one sector skills council per sector.

This Gordian knot could, so the researcher saw, be cut by the simple expedient of switching the research population to be that of employees of

actual organisations within the service sectors of choice, rather than of bodies constituted to represent these organisations (in some way).

It was this point of clarity that resulted in the researcher deciding on a more direct research population composed of actors from service organisations operating within the sectors of interest.

## 5.5 DETERMINING THE SECTORS OF INTEREST

The next apposite consideration was around what in fact were the sectors of most interest? The researcher reported in the previous chapter how he undertook an extensive regression analysis whose purpose had been to identify the sectors that might be of most interest in identifying problems linking increases in productivity with improvements in skills.

In the event, this analysis proved too complex and too dependent on economic data to be effectively used for this purpose within a social science thesis.

Accordingly, the researcher needed a new method to identify the sectors of interest, but in identifying this method could draw on his experience of the extensive analysis of economic data sector by sector that he had performed.

The key pertinent issue that seemed to arise from this analysis was that for some sectors, quality could be considered more objectively determined in some sectors, while in other sectors the price seemed to encapsulate a greater amount of information about the quality of the good or service and this might include sectors where the evaluation of quality by the customer (or client) might involve a more subjective assessment. This was evident in the way that in some sectors, as the unit price decreased and 'productivity' improved, so too did the gross value added. In other sectors, in contrast,

the gross value added tended to increase when the unit price increased, indicating a positive financial response to declining productivity.

The researcher was unable though to use this result directly. Instead, drawing indirectly on this result, the researcher envisioned that a way forward would be to firstly respecify the criteria for sector selection in terms of the quality characteristics of the sector; and then through a literature search identify which sectors fulfilled the criteria. In this point of clarity, the researcher saw that this would both locate the choice of sectors in the literature, and have a good chance of being effective.

The actual process of selection was, briefly, as follows.

The starting point was taken as Shafti *et al.*'s (2007) classification of services, a more recent and more sophisticated classification than Chase's (1978). Shafti *et al.* provide a two-way classification of a selection of services according to the degree of front value added and the degree of customer contact (2007: 724). If a service had both high front value added and high customer contact, then the researcher considered it as a candidate for being a sector where it is likely that quality is subjectively determined. The relevance of high customer contact to subjective quality stems from Shostack (1977) and Chase (1978). High front value added is relevant because it foregrounds the 'client interaction' (Shafti *et al.* 2007: 712 drawing on Maister 1983) and the interaction environment was found to be central in the discussion on credence and experience properties in Chapter 3.

Four services were classified as high on both counts: hotels, consultancy, universities and airlines. Two of these the researcher considered problematic.

Universities are part of the education sector, which has a very significant apparatus for establishing objective standards of achievement through

examinations and assessment, and which are often considered indicators of quality. The researcher therefore considered it highly arguable as to whether quality is generally subjectively determined within the education sector.

The second problematic sector was consultancy, which forms part of the 'other business services' sector. This is a portmanteau sector covering a wide range of business services from accountancy and computing to cleaning, and may be for that reason more inconsistent than other sectors in its characteristics.

This left two possible sectors originating from Shafti *et al.*: transport, and hotels and catering. A number of service sectors are not covered at all by Shafti *et al.* These are wholesale, real estate, public administration and defence, health and social work, and other services. Of these, other services is again a portmanteau sector like other business services and was therefore also discounted. Wholesale and real estate are probably most like retail and finance of the sectors covered by Shafti *et al.*, and so would not qualify. Public administration and defence consists mainly of back office functions rather than customer facing operations, and so would also be unlikely to qualify.

The remaining sector, health and social work, was not so easily discountable and so became a third possible sector where service quality might be likely to be subjectively determined. Health and social work also featured in many of the examples in the literature review which were used by the researcher to highlight the contrast between macro-economic and academic context, and actors' voices; so, reversing the argument used there, this was taken as an indicator of a sector where quality might be subjectively determined.

The selection process thus identified three service sectors, transport, hotels and catering, and health and social work, within which to look for organisations where service quality might be subjectively determined.

This selection process also provided another point of clarity. The focus on the 'client interaction', the researcher saw, really situates subjective quality as being about *intersubjectivity* and sympathetic affect.

## 5.6 THE USEFULNESS OF THE CONCEPT OF PRODUCTIVITY

The third aspect of transition was from a focus on the meaning of the concept of productivity in the sectors under study to a focus on the *usefulness* of the concept.

This shift of focus originated from the period of time the researcher spent concentrating on the economic regression analysis. The choice of structure for this analysis around a null hypothesis that the quantitative characteristics of productivity were the same in all sectors against a series of alternative hypotheses that in various ways these characteristics differed between sectors meant that the researcher became habituated in thinking about a range of productivity-related measures and responses which showed significant variation between sectors. These were the alternative hypotheses that during the course of the analysis proved to be significant.

The researcher thus became used from the continuum of the research process to a mental 'mis-en-scene' in which, for some sectors, aspects of the concept of productivity seemed well-fitted; for some other sectors, some or all of these aspects were neutral; and for still other sectors, the concept of productivity appeared in some ways or other to be counter-productive.

It was therefore at this point natural for the researcher to call into question the very usefulness of the concept of productivity in some contexts. This question was highly relevant to the research method the researcher had in



mind at the time, as if it was not *useful* in a particular organisation then discursive enquiry into the topic of the meaning of productivity might prove fruitless because, simply, the word might not be in use and hence have no meaning ascribable by actors *in that context*.

Over the period of the planning of the new methodology, the researcher went further than this, to the point where he considered whether or not to formally set up the hypothesis that in certain sectors, the concept of productivity was in fact not useful, and instigate a quantitative testing procedure for this process as part of the planned methodology.

The researcher drew back from this approach because firstly it still remained difficult to locate the source of such a hypothesis directly in the research literature, and secondly because of the possible difficulties that might occur during the use of a non-interactive quantitative research instrument such as a postal survey in establishing securely in any particular case whether the service quality for a respondent organisation was in fact subjectively determined, and so part of the research population.

However, the path to this position of entertaining such an idea as a *possible hypothesis* to test is one that is ethnographically relevant, as the difference between such a 'possible hypothesis' and a developing subjectivity is central to this thesis.

The preparation of interview topics was the crucial element on this path.

#### 5.6.1 Preparation of interview topics

The researcher had selected mainly semi-structured interviews as his preferred research method, and the main areas that the interviews needed to cover were a description of the services the organisation offered, the role of the participant in the organisation, who the organisation's main customers were, what were the primary goals of the organisation, what the

key aspects of service quality were and how these were measured, how training and education contributed to the organisation's effectiveness, and if not previously covered how the participant viewed the concept of productivity and its usefulness when considering the contribution that training and education could make.

It was expected that the organisational goals would vary considerably between organisations. Some might view improving profitability as their primary goal; others, particularly publicly funded services, might see their primary goal in terms such as making a difference to service users' life chances or quality of life (e.g. Billett and Somerville 2004: 314), improving health and well being or improving clinical outcomes (e.g. Morgan *et al.* 2008: 235) or meeting the needs of service users (e.g. services for the homeless).

Identifying the key aspects of service quality would be an important part of the research, as the research was aimed at those organisations where quality is subjectively determined. Key questions here were whether there were objective measures of quality; whether there were subjective measures based on customer feedback; if both, which were considered more important when making decisions; whether customers' subjective judgement was based more around what Parasuraman *et al.* (1985) term 'experience' properties and customer expectations and satisfaction, or around 'credence' properties about the customer's beliefs concerning the competence of staff and the customer's safety and security when using the service.

The penultimate topic centred around methods used to improve the organisation's effectiveness, and the contribution of training and education to these. It was the preparation of this topic that had particular significance towards the way the concept of productivity might be handled.

The researcher used two primary sources to inform discussions in these areas. These were again Shafti *et al.* (2007), for a range of management methods, and Dewhurst *et al.* (2007) for a range of ways in which training and education might contribute to effectiveness.

Possible management methods to improve effectiveness drawing on Shafti *et al.* (2007: 723) included improving the competence of staff and increasing capacity, and more generally increasing or improving productivity, commitment, market share, new markets, communication with customers, customer feedback, systems, the relationship of inputs to outputs, as well as managing customer expectations, reducing costs, introducing new technology, avoiding quality defects, reducing the impact of poor quality, adding more value, increasing GVA.

Possible contributions of training and education to effectiveness drawn from Dewhurst *et al.* (2007: 138) were improving or increasing customer satisfaction, quality, employee morale, profitability, teamwork, legal compliance, corporate reputation, sales, flexibility, competitiveness, staff retention, ethical compliance and reducing waste, developing future managers and encouraging recruitment.

The final topic of the usefulness of productivity, if not previously covered, would centre around two questions. Firstly, did the organisation make use specifically of the term productivity when considering the role of training and education within the organisation; and if so, did the organisation use specific measures that it termed productivity measures. If not, what was the participant's personal view of the usefulness of the concept of productivity when considering how training and education could contribute to improving the organisation's effectiveness; did it bring positive or negative connotations with it, and in what way?

While up to this point the use of Dewhurst *et al.* in preparing a topic schedule had been routine and mundane, as the researcher progressed through the next stages of how to approach individuals in the research population to negotiate and arrange interviews, it began to take on a more confirmed presence and fixity in the researcher's mind.

Dewhurst *et al.* (2007) is a good example of research with employees and/or owners of tourism businesses, organisations that fall within the sectors of interest, looking explicitly at the benefits that training could provide. The paper reported on 15 such possible benefits, listed above. But amongst these benefits, improving productivity did not appear. As the researcher pictured in his mind this research being discussed, planned and executed, how could it come about that productivity would not arise as a possible benefit of training? *Unless* amongst the researchers and the people with whom they initially discussed the planned research instruments, productivity was not seen as a concept relevant to their work.

It was this studied reflection that elevated the idea that the concept of productivity might not be useful in some types of organisations from a prudent basis for going forward to that of a possible hypothesis that might be tested. As mentioned above, the researcher drew back from actually instigating a testing procedure, but the thought had been there.

## 5.7 THE TRAINING AND EDUCATION CONTEXT

The reflective points of clarity and resolution and the reflective impact of the research continuum discussed in the previous three sections formed the core of the basis for the redevelopment of the research question and the planned method of enquiry. A final part of the interview preparation, while not directly contributing to the planned method, nevertheless played an important subsequent role. To make the account of these later developments clearer and less involved, this topic is covered now, according to the point in time at which it occurred, though its relevance

comes later. The reader may prefer to skim over this rather detailed section, and refer back to it later as a resource if needs be.

In addition to the preparation of the specific interview topics as discussed in the previous section, the researcher sought to be well informed on current training and education issues generally by conducting a wider trawl of a sample of recent research identifying current training needs and issues in the three sectors.

This research is described in some detail in this section, as it came to be an important resource for the intense reflections that followed the first interview conducted using the planned methodology, reflections that were instrumental in changing the planned approach and deciding the eventual analytic direction that the researcher took.

The sample was selected by a manual trawl, starting from 2005, through the Journal of Education and Work, The Service Industries Journal, the Journal of European Industrial Training and the Industrial and Commercial Training Journal. The latter is not peer reviewed, but was included to get a wide breadth of background. The journals were selected to draw on, respectively, the education and transition perspective, the training perspective, the business perspective and a more informal perspective, though there is considerable overlap in practice.

The search was based on looking for practical pieces of research, i. e. directly with organisations within the sectors under study amongst actors engaged in actual work practices, either explicitly around the subject of training and education or on topics that were considered likely by the researcher to be relevant to training and education.

The search undertaken was not designed to be comprehensive, but instead to identify a cross-section of papers that would provide a broad background to possible current training and education issues that might arise during

interviewing. A full list of the 35 relevant practical research papers that were found in this way are listed in Appendix 1. The following discussion on contemporary training issues draws on both these 35 practical research papers and on some of the research encountered in the more formal context of the literature review that was presented in Chapters 2 and 3.

#### 5.7.1 Transport and travel

There are three identifiable training issues in recent research literature on the transport sector (including travel tours and tour guides). The first, raised by Nilsson *et al.* (2005), mainly in the context of micro-businesses, is that of articulating and making more explicit tacit knowledge and understanding, especially of managers or owner/managers. The second concerns staff having an orientation towards service excellence, and the third concerns personality traits or dispositions. The second and third issues are drawn from Constanti and Gibbs (2005), Beatson *et al.* (2008), Ekinici and Dawes (2009) and Li *et al.* (2009).

Ekinici and Dawes recommend identifying relevant personality traits as well as the skills and knowledge required for 'customer interaction quality' in the selection and training process (2009: 517) and Beatson *et al.* recommend training to support 'service orientation' (2008: 221), which they define as policies and practice being 'directed towards the delivery of exceptional customer service' (2008: 213).

The operationalisation of the two concepts of interaction quality and service orientation have considerable overlap, including 'prompt service', 'willing to help' and 'consistently courteous' in the former, and 'prompt service', 'opportunity to please' and 'committed to serving' in the latter (Ekinici and Dawes 2009: 521 and Beatson *et al.* 2008: 217).

While relevant personality traits must be selected for in the recruitment process rather than created from scratch through training, as 'you bring

your personality with you' (Constanti and Gibbs 2005: 111), nevertheless a number of authors point to a potential training need around the emotional aspect of work performed by frontline staff in the transport (and other) sectors.

Ekinci and Dawes (2009: 517) and Li *et al.* (2009: 1777) recommend attention to emotional aspects in the training process. More particularly, Constanti and Gibbs researching emotional labour argue that while recognising that staff 'cannot be trained to perform emotional labour' (2005: 111) nevertheless recommend that greater attention needs to be provided to support those involved in emotional labour through tailored training and coaching, particularly in how to deal with awkward customers (2005: 113).

#### 5.7.2 Health and social care

In the health and social care sector, a number of training needs arise. Ardenghi *et al.* (2007) identify a need (in Canada) for improved methods for trainee dentists to learn ethical practice, with similar statements made around 'ethical deliberations' concerning newly qualified doctors and nurses in Norway (Smeby and Vågan 2008: 170).

Storr and Trenchard (2010) research leadership development and the management of change in a mental health setting, and McCabe and Garavan call for leadership and management development for nurses, though somewhat hesitantly (2008: 561), with Purcell and Milner also calling for improved management development for nurses in Ireland (2005: 760).

In Finland, Collin *et al.* (2010: 58) consider there is a need for improved inter-professional education to support better teamwork and thus better patient care in a healthcare setting; a topic also raised by Meads *et al.* (2009: 77) in the UK in both health and social care, who identify that local

community development settings, including independent and voluntary agencies ('the third sector'), seem to be more successful in this regard.

Wiredu (2007) presents an example of upgrading professional skills of (mainly) nurses in the NHS to support new work practices. Pare and Le Maistre (2006: 378) recommend the stimulation of proactive learning, including questioning standard practices, for new entrants into social work in Canada. Olivet *et al.* (2010: 234) report the need for team building and training in new professional (clinical) skills amongst workers in projects addressing chronic homelessness in the USA.

Engstrom *et al.* (2009: 181) report the need for support for bilingual social workers in communicating often complex professional terminology in a second language, also in the USA. Deshpande and Lagarde (2008: 64) identify demand for advanced-level training in social marketing (email, social internet sites etc.) in an international survey of individuals working mainly in organisations concerned with improving health, protecting the environment and developing community involvement.

In an international review, Docherty *et al.* (2008: 169) document a range of training needs for service providers in communicating with informal or home caregivers in areas such as transmission of clinical knowledge and understanding, and understanding the non-medical needs of caregivers from a range of cultural backgrounds.

### 5.7.3 Hotels and restaurants

In the hotel and restaurant sector, Altinay *et al.* (2008: 929) identify training for multi-skilling employees amongst micro and small Turkish catering businesses in London as an important factor in competing on quality. Wilton (2006) potentially links employee development with multi-skilling and employee commitment in hotels in south-west England. Nolan *et al.* (2010: 448) identify skill needs for graduate entrants into the hotel industry in



Ireland in the areas of employee management, finance skills including yield management and interpersonal skills. Pratten and Lovatt (2005: 659) identify a need for training in regulatory compliance, especially employment law, amongst independent public house licensees in the UK.

Tsai (2009: 1445) propose training to support 'emotional management' for employees in Taiwanese hotels, which might include reinforcing the use of emotions for self-encouragement and retaining emotional focus when under emotional stress or strain. Kuo (2009: 1211) also identifies the need for emotion management in Taiwanese hotels, as well as language skills, personal service skills, time management, problem solving and crisis and emergency management, as well as a number of technical or professional skills such as training in front office, housekeeping and food and beverages.

In the same context, Tseng *et al.* (2008: 1022-1024), while not making explicit training recommendations, present findings that show that the cluster of best performing hotels in their sample, that termed 'overall innovation', is the only one with positive scores for both employee training and creation of new ideas; this suggests that training that supports the creation of new ideas could be beneficial.

In Korea, Lee *et al.* (2010: 95) report that restaurant franchisors value training in food service, preparation and food hygiene. In Spain, Soriano (2005: 608) identify language and marketing skills as the main training needs for hotel staff. In the USA, Rivera *et al.* (2008: 622) find the greatest current training needs for managers of casual dining restaurants to be in human resources and the development of restaurant facilities.

## 5.8 CONCLUSION

This brief survey of the training and education issues concludes the researcher's account of his philosophical stance and the three key changes, based on episodes of reflection, points of clarity or resolution, and

reflection stemming from the habituation of thought engendered by the continuum of the research experience, that he made as he revised and developed the research question and planned method of enquiry from its original formulation.

Using a critical realist perspective, during this phase the researcher significantly developed the research question in terms of the research population, moving towards more direct enquiry with employees of organisations in the sectors of interest because of his reflection on the difficulties of interweaving thematic analysis of indirect enquiry via employees of different sector skills councils.

Secondly, the researcher moved away from a quantitative basis for identifying the sectors of most interest; but his quantitative investigations informed the way in which he approached the new selection method of using the research literature as a resource. In particular, he saw that the criteria could be formulated in terms of whether or not the quality of output of a sector was subjectively, rather than objectively determined, and associated with this that the intersubjective nature of staff-customer interactions might be central to this issue.

The third major change was to shift the research question from a focus on the meaning of productivity in the sectors of interest, to a more basic focus on whether or not the concept of productivity was even useful. This change in focus drew particularly on the way the researcher formally structured his hypotheses within the exploratory quantitative analysis that had originally been designed to identify the sectors of interest, and the researcher's habits of thinking during the extended period in which he was performing this quantitative analysis. During interview preparation, this shift went so far as the researcher considering whether to set up the question of the usefulness of the concept of productivity as a formal research hypothesis, but he drew back from this less interpretative approach.

The survey of the training and education issues that might emerge during interview that the researcher conducted during his interview preparation, while not contributing to the formulation of the planned method, nevertheless underlined to the researcher that such issues were multifarious and complex, and this complexity formed part of his mental subtext as he went into the first of the planned interviews.

The significance of the sample of papers collected during this survey as a resource for understanding the finer detail of how productivity as a concept might interleave with work practices in some sectors will be picked up in the next chapter, in which the researcher presents the final stage of the methodological development.

At the heart of this final stage are the experiences of the first interview undertaken using the planned methodology and the process of reflection and analysis that followed the interview. These form the key passage, the difficult mountain pass, in the development of the researcher's subjectivity towards service sector productivity, and the specific methods used during this stage are also set out in the next chapter.

## *Chapter 6*

# From realism to constructionism

### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous two chapters, using an ethnographic approach the researcher has set out his path to the position he was in as he was about to conduct the first interview in his planned method of enquiry.

The aim has been to provide the reader with as much detail as possible so that the reader will be able to best imagine putting her/himself in the position of the researcher at the point of a crucial phase of this interview, the phase during which the topic of productivity was introduced.

Why is it important that the researcher should have approached presenting his thesis in this way?

The experience of the first interview was a critical experience, and this crisis turned on the change that occurred when the topic of productivity was broached. The method of broaching in turn depended on the knowledge and prior work the researcher had done in preparing for the interviews.

As it turned out, the first interview was the only interview undertaken, because of a number of factors but primarily because of the nature of the experience. This experience was seminal in the researcher developing a new subjectivity towards productivity in the service sectors under study, the main concern of this thesis. The essence of the experience was that whatever occurred during the interview, it did not *settle out* in his mind afterwards, even long afterwards, but there remained something strange there gnawing.

So this chapter starts by setting out ethnographically in sections 6.2 and 6.3 how this first interview came about, what happened in it, and the subsequent period of reflection. This is followed by a description of the researcher's initial attempts at analysis, before setting out the analytic method the researcher ultimately developed to assimilate the meaning of the interview.

The rationale for the selection of the method is based closely on Roulston (2011), and Roulston (2001). Roulston argues for the use of conversation analysis particularly in a reflective mode to revisit researchers' previous analyses of their own interviews and investigate 'interview problems and puzzling interactions in detail' (2011: 93), thus leading to 'a mindful consideration of one's role in the generation of data for research purposes' (2011: 92). Roulston (2001) provides an example of a single case conversation analysis with auto-ethnographic, reflective aspects based on such an approach.

The main analytic method eventually used, therefore, was one of detailed single case conversation analysis of the interactional troubles that accompanied the introduction of the topic of productivity, in order to isolate or elucidate the source of the strangeness, a strangeness which acted as a motivating factor in the development of a new subjectivity. The analysis draws mainly on Sacks (1992a, 1992b), Rapley and Antaki (1998), Rapley (2001), ten Have (2007), Hutchby and Wooffitt (2008) and Sidnell (2010). The method and its rationale, including the way that the researcher identified that the interview passage in question can be characterised as one containing 'interactional troubles', are set out in sections 6.6, 6.7 and 6.8.

The analysis is not quite 'pure' conversation analysis. In the first place, the researcher has drawn on a number of auto-ethnographic resources to help inform and elucidate the conversation analysis at certain points, in the form

of the researcher's own memories of what he was thinking at the time but not verbally articulating. The incorporation of such memories as resources into the analysis has, the researcher hopes, augmented the 'mindfulness' of the analysis and so helped provide additional insight.

Secondly, the researcher has used membership categorisation device analysis to draw out the *topical content* that accompanied the strangeness and which also contributed to the development of his subjectivity, based on Sacks (1992a) and Baker (2004).

Alternative conversation analytic trajectories have also been considered, one based on Rapley and Antaki (1998) around the use of techniques within interviews to exploit the power differential in favour of the interviewer, and the second concerning the emergence of local moral worlds within interviews based on Roulston (2001), also drawing on Rapley (2004).

This consideration of the second alternative trajectory led to further reflection on how the interpretation of the topical content could be parsed, that is the setting of the interpretation within Yv's world, and indeed further development of the researcher's *research* subjectivity.

This was a late additional step in the researcher's move from a realist to an increasingly constructionist outlook as the reflective research process unfolded, and the significance of the *detail* of the interactional context of the researcher's interview with Yv became increasingly apparent. Key aspects of this in fact open-ended transition are described in the intervening sections 6.4 and 6.5, starting with how the researcher's original interpretation of Yv's talk as being a 'personal statement' came about. Like the initial sections of this chapter, these intervening sections are ethnographic in style, in contrast to the more formal subsequent sections that set out the conversation analysis method.

The broad structure of this chapter is therefore to first set out out ethnographically the researcher's transition from a realist to a constructionist position. This is then followed by more formally setting out the methods for establishing exactly what it was that needed analysing; and then the rationale and the method of analysis itself that flowed from the newly developed constructionist perspective.

So, first the story of the first interview.

## 6.2 THE EXPERIENCE OF THE FIRST INTERVIEW

The first interview came about through chance, through a social encounter in which a friend, here named Yv (pronounced Eve), agreed to be interviewed. The researcher had approached her informally, as she worked in a role and in an organisation that seemed to fit with the target research population. The encounter was fleeting, and so as luck would have it Yv came into the interview unaware that there was a focus on 'productivity', though she read and signed the consent forms just prior to interview which did identify productivity as a topic.

The timing of the interview was on a late Sunday afternoon in mid-September 2010, at Yv's home.

The interview went well, with the interviewer covering all the planned topics, and Yv responding with enthusiasm to the questions. As had been planned, the researcher did not himself explicitly raise the topic of productivity during this phase, and eventually the list of topics was exhausted without the word 'productivity' having been mentioned. Accordingly, as he had pre-planned, at this point the researcher turned to asking Yv directly about productivity.

What then ensued was a to and fro in which the researcher attempted to get Yv to engage on the topic of productivity, with Yv not showing any wish to talk directly about 'productivity', talking rather about things that might be

connected with productivity. Eventually (and this was the researcher's strong impression at the time) Yv acknowledged that the word was not used at her work, and the researcher turned to asking Yv about her personal reaction to productivity.

There then ensued, so it seemed to the researcher in situ, a fairly rapid exchange on this, in which some clarity emerged. This being done, the researcher closed off the interview, happy with it. Yv did though comment at that time how the end part of the interview had been different from the rest.

Thereafter, the researcher set about the transcription process, a process which he tends to find, and did find in this case, time consuming and emotionally draining. The transcription process lasted several weeks. Shortly after, the researcher began to send out interview request letters using the commercial mailing list he had in order to secure further interviews.

But what he had expected to happen at this point did not happen. The researcher *expected* as he went through the transcription process for the interview to settle itself out in his mind, to resolve itself down in some way and attach itself in its constituent elements to, or in some way become connected or contrasted to, pre-existing thoughts, ideas, viewpoints.

This 'settling out' though failed to materialise. The researcher's mailshot also failed to provide any positive responses.

In November, Yv suggested a follow-up interview, as she was now doing a management course and she thought that she might have something more to say about productivity. There being no other avenue active at that time, the researcher agreed to this idea.



But now the characteristic image in the researcher's mind from that period, late November 2010, is sitting on a bus coming home from work on the night of the planned interview as the snow began to fall heavily and receiving a phone call from Yv saying she would not be able to make the interview.

As the snow continued to fall and settle, staying really through to Christmas, it came to seem to the researcher increasingly unlikely that people from the transport industry struggling with the snow, or those working in hotels and restaurants in deep recession seeing their pre-Christmas takings disappearing as people stayed home, or those working in health and social care inundated through extra pressures from the inclement weather, would have the time, willingness and patience to agree to become involved in a research interview, on a topic that the researcher was not convinced grabbed their attention.

Under the weight of these misgivings, the researcher was left to reflect further on what happened in the first interview and why. What was it that would not go away? This process of reflection is described in the next section, in words written fairly close to the time.

### 6.3 A PERIOD OF REFLECTION

The reflection focused on four strands. The first strand drew on the 35 pieces of research that the researcher used to inform himself about contemporary training issues in the sectors under study, described in the previous chapter, and the connections (or lack of) between training and education and the concept of productivity that could be found there.

The second strand was around the problems of ethics and validity involved in finding more participants willing to be interviewed on the subject of productivity. The third strand was around what the first participant had said about productivity, and the difficulties involved in interpreting this, and the

way that the participant had used the post-interview 'strip' to highlight the discussion around productivity.

The final strand was around the source of the need, identified in the literature, to re-negotiate meanings of abstract societal goals (an example of which might be improving productivity), which was traced to the 'monologizing' of diverse voices through political processes.

Starting with the first reflective strand, in the 35 pieces of practical research identifying contemporary actual or potential training and education issues in the sectors under study, 'productivity' or 'productive' was a fairly common concept, being found in 16 of the 35 either in a general or in a more technical sense (for more detail, see Appendix 1). These references, however, were overwhelmingly either general or occurring in the introduction or literature review. References to productivity that occurred in the findings, discussion or conclusion were scant.

There was one mention of productivity as a 'possible' benefit of improving motivation amongst hotel employees (Kuo 2009: 1212); it was also mentioned as a probable general benefit of economies of scale in hotels 'since employees become more productive' by Claver-Cortes *et al.* (2009: 952), with these authors also claiming confirmation in their conclusion of Brown and Dev's (1999) findings on productivity, though indeed in Brown and Dev the concept of productivity is entertained only by the authors and not presented using that specific language to the participants; and the final mention is by Rego *et al.* (2010: 1434) but in this case with the negative connotation of an emphasis on productivity 'MacDonaldizing' health-related services.

Thus, while for many of the authors of these 35 papers 'productivity' was sufficiently high in their consciousness to appear in some form in the main text, in none of these papers did it emerge naturally as a finding from

qualitative research nor was the language of productivity considered of sufficient relevance to actors to be included, as far as can be ascertained, as a part of a variable in quantitative research.

The second reflective strand drew on the experience so far of finding research participants. The way forward seemed to either entail problems of ethics or problems of validity. If the researcher downplayed the focus on productivity in negotiating potential participants' interest, this risked misrepresenting the thrust of the research, and leading to situations where interviewees felt short-changed or in some way let down by, or even worse tricked into, the interview process, with the former having already to some extent happened inadvertently in the first interview.

Alternatively, if the researcher went down the path of being more persuasive or in some way inveigling people to participate, then this might compromise the ecological validity (Cicourel 1982) of the research, as it would be less clear whether participants were involved in an activity designed to facilitate the expression of their views or whether they were being drawn away from a focus on their work context into a scenario that was more designed to fulfil the needs of the *planned* research programme, and in particular the needs of the researcher in wishing to be able to present a thesis using a method that followed fairly conventional lines, and so might the more easily be acceptable to the examiners.

The third reflexive strand was on some of the more subtle aspects of the first interview, including the "after the interview" . . . "strip" of time' (Warren *et al.* 2003: 93 referencing Goffman 1974: 10). Warren *et al.* argue that the strip of time between the formal end of the interview and leave taking is 'realer to the respondent in the Goffmanic sense of connected to self – rather than interviewer – relevances' (2003: 107). In this case, the participant chose to exercise this switch in frames to point to the nature of the ending of the interview, identifying in some way its unnaturalness.

From the researcher's perspective, the natural ending indeed would have come shortly after the fifty-first minute when the respondent, Yv, expressed the summative feeling 'I love my job'. And yet, because no reference to 'productivity' had emerged spontaneously during the first 51 minutes, it was necessary from the point of view of the research question to prolong the interview in order to ask specific questions about productivity.

From this point on, the participant was less forthcoming and required more prompting and reassurance from the researcher than hitherto, with many short, negative or opaque answers by the respondent in contrast to her earlier more fluent, positive responses.

The participant's use of the post-interview frame thus pointed to a splitting of the interview into two phases: a natural phase (from her perspective) up to minute 51, with minutes 51-55 forming a less comfortable phase.

The significance of this splitting to the researcher in his reflections was that it was the second less comfortable phase that would form the substantive contribution to the research question. There was a reluctance of the participant to actively contribute during this phase, and this reluctance combined with the opaqueness of some answers indicated that the analysis and interpretation of the phase would not be straightforward. It might also mean that in comparative or thematic analysis alongside other interviews, the basis of such comparison might not be clear.

The fourth and final reflexive strand stemmed from this presenting difficulty in interpretation, and was around the nature of the problem that was under research. When the potential difficulty in interpretation started to become apparent, part of the researcher's response was to start looking more closely at Billett and Somerville's (2004) reference to the need to re-negotiate the meaning of abstract societal goals taking into account those who perform actual work practices.

Was the Foucaultian 'canonical form of talk and interaction' within the interview process (Warren *et al.* 2003: 108-109) operating as part of a panopticon, under whose gaze the participant needs to dissimulate and hide her real meanings as in a riddle? And if so, might the interview process itself not be implicated in the difficulties of re-negotiating meaning from the perspective of an actor involved in actual work practices?

Billett and Somerville's 're-negotiating meaning' (2004: 315) is taken from Edwards and Boreham's (2003) work on identifying how diverse voices become 'monologiz[ed]' through the process of consultation and policy-making in the European Union. Edwards and Boreham first of all propose negotiation as an ideal:

Here, a learning citizen is not pre-conceived as contributing to pre-established goals and ways of acting, but is also involved in the negotiation of goals and actions, some or all of which may counter those posited by those involved in formulating policy at EU, state and sub-state level.' (Edwards and Boreham 2003: 418)

They then describe the 'renegotiations of meaning' as a process that happens when policy meanings are reformulated by 'citizens' in a way that is meaningful to the citizen's actual context (Edwards and Boreham 2003: 419). This latter process of renegotiation is observed in the form of a meeting between educationalists, representatives and civil servants from eight EU countries debating the implications of aspects of the European Employment Strategy (Edwards and Boreham 2003: 412-413).

### 6.3.1 Monologization and functional grammar

In turn, Edwards and Boreham characterise the events in this meeting as consistent with Wodak's analysis that such documents as the Strategy are the result of a 'monologizing process' that had the effect of suppressing the diversity of original contributing voices thus compromising transparency and democracy (2000: 203).

And as a result, when a policy that has been developed through such a process is re-presented to diverse actors, as in the meeting that Edwards and Boreham describe, the policy gets re-interpreted and its meaning re-negotiated as the actors seek to re-instate the original diversity of voices; and in practice there may be little connection between the abstracted central policy and local organisations such as companies (2003: 413).

Wodak herself uses critical discourse analysis (2000: 187) to identify how arguments get 'recontextualiz[ed]' during meetings to generate a policy paper on employment policy for the EU's Council of Ministers, through 'the interaction, the negotiations and compromises occurring at the meetings' (2000: 202).

Wodak obtains her results through a method of analysis that plays close attention to textual analysis, both of written text and conversation, but these texts are considered in their historical and social *contexts* rather than purely linguistically (or interactionally) (2000: 187).

The monologizing process is characterised as happening in two particular ways that can be observed through linguistic analysis, using functional grammar (Halliday 1994; Thompson 1996). Firstly, it is achieved by identifying the views of some (the 'non-experts') as irrational and others (the 'experts') as rational (Wodak 2000: 191), a process referred to as 'transitivity'.

This happens both within the text (2000: 200) and by those making successful arguments in the meetings (2000: 202), in order to resolve a conflict within the meetings between preserving social cohesion with welfare policies and reducing these welfare policies to become more competitive, in the context of globalization and its impact on unemployment in Europe (2000: 199).

The second way in which the monologizing process is accomplished is through the manipulation of 'theme' and 'rheme' (Wodak 2000: 191). Wodak describes theme as 'what is understood as presupposed and not questionable' and rheme 'as the new information that should be focused upon' in a particular context (2000: 191).

Drawing these four strands together, the researcher summarised them in this way. There were difficulties in pursuing the plan of multiple interviews because it was proving difficult to find people who would participate, and because the first interview revealed tensions around discussions on productivity. The evidence from the research literature also suggested that other researchers had not come across emergent responses from participants concerning productivity in the sectors under study, nor seemingly did researchers often seek to directly garner information concerning productivity in these sectors.

Furthermore it was not easy for the researcher to understand exactly what the first participant *did* say about productivity, although it did not seem to be positive. This difficulty in understanding combined in the researcher's mind with a need for individuals to 'negotiate meaning' amid risks of 'monologizing' meanings through process. One clear way of monologizing a person's voice would be simply for the researcher not to understand it.

The key conclusion, therefore, the researcher drew from this period of intense reflection was that in order to resolve the dilemma of how to proceed, the first step should be to undertake an analysis to understand as far as possible what the first participant had meant, and that detailed textual analysis, following Wodak (2000), might perhaps be a good starting point for this analysis.

#### 6.4 SHEER CHANCE

By sheer chance, the first chapter in the volume in which Wodak's (2000) paper was published was an article by Sarangi analysing discourse type shifts within activity types, such as interviews. As this featured detailed textual analysis (in the form of conversation analysis), the researcher thought he might as well start his further reading about how to undertake detailed textual analysis with Sarangi's chapter.

In addition to Sarangi, as subsequent reading showed, a number of other authors such as Rapley (2001: 304), Roulston (2006: 529), Roulston (2011: 89) and, in applied linguistics, Mann (2011: 21) increasingly recommend using conversation analysis to investigate what is happening particularly in research interviews when the interviewer plays a significant or non-standard role in co-constructing and negotiating the interview with the participant.

Together with frame analysis (van den Berg 1996, Ensink 2003), discussed in section 6.8 below, and other ways of theorising the interview (Roulston 2006, 2010, 2011; Holstein and Gubrium 2003; Gubrium and Holstein 2003; Silverman 2001, 2006; Cicourel 1982; Baker 2004; Mishler 1986), and building on Levinson (1983) and Grice (1975), this looked a feasible way forward.

One of Sarangi's examples, Example 1, was of particular interest because it presents a medical oral exam interview in which the candidate finds himself in 'interactional trouble' (2000: 9). As he is in an exam and needs to *demonstrate* his competence, the candidate accounts fairly specifically to his interviewers for these troubles, and thus provides something of a running commentary which is useful for analytic interpretation and inference.

In his initial approach to detailed analysis, the researcher drew up a close turn-by-turn comparison between his interview with Yv and this passage of



interactional troubles from Sarangi's Example 1 (2000: 8), and in so doing interpreted the corresponding passage in the interview with Yv as a discourse type shift from discussions based on Yv's work experience towards a more personal statement by Yv. However, this approach remained too realist as it depended for making inferences on the external, out-of-local-context, comparison with the talk given in Sarangi (2000), on the flawed basis that somehow the two conversations necessarily were following some essentially similar pattern.

The effect was to draw the focus away from the local context, and the researcher missed some key elements of interactional trouble that occurred both before and after the specific excerpt from the interview with Yv that was taken as matching up to Example 1 in Sarangi. Whatever the analytic comparison may have showed, it certainly could not account for the interactional troubles that fell *outside* the range of the comparison.

## 6.5 LUCK IS BLIND

So luck, like love, can be blinding, and the realist serpent beguiled me and I did eat. The gaudy baubles of inference and analytic structure drew the pilgrim's eye away from the constructionist truth, that meaning emerges and is constructed *locally*.

The comparison with the Sarangi excerpt may have been good as far as it went, but 'as far as it went' was not defined locally but through what happened and was available in the Sarangi example. Complete congruence could only be coincidental. The researcher's saviour in this instance was following Mazeland and ten Have's (1996: 113) and Rapley's (2001: 319) tenet, that both prior and post talk should be included to allow an extract to be presented in the context in which it occurred.

With this resource available during viva, and with the help of the external examiner, it became clear that the excerpt from the interview with Yv that

was used to draw comparison with the Sarangi excerpt did not include *all* the examples of interactional trouble evident in the interview, and therefore inferences based on what was going on in the Sarangi interview could not offer a complete, or possibly even a satisfactory, elucidation of the interactional troubles that occurred in the interview with Yv.

This process of demonstration during the researcher's viva was important because it brought home to the researcher something which had not previously been vividly apparent, that the researcher's thinking behind the way he asked the initial question about productivity, while known to him, was unknown and perhaps problematic to a third party, Yv being one such example of a third party.

This is a good illustration of problems with a realist perspective when analysing conversations. The researcher's (conscious) thinking and intentions were patent to himself, part of his empirical world; but to a third party, while forming part of that third party's actual world in as much as for example the third party needs or wants to interact with the researcher through conversation, the researcher's thinking and intentions could only be ascertained or intuited through what was available *empirically* to the third party.

The proposed solution was to make a more complete analysis of the interactional troubles evident in the research interview, including in particular the way in which the question emerged and was asked, based not on comparison with a single comparable example, but based on theoretic objects or elements drawn from the conversation analysis literature, for example from Sacks's work.

This accordingly is the procedure that has now been followed, and the method for which is covered more formally in the next sections.

## 6.6 THE STRUCTURE OF THE ANALYTIC METHOD

The structure then of the analytic method is to first present and analyse (though not generally using detailed textual analysis) the first 51 minutes of the interview. This is based on two extended excerpts of around 9 minutes each, and a third shorter excerpt.

The aim here is to show that the work organisation and role of Yv is relevant to the research question and target research population. It will also serve to demonstrate the nature of the interaction during this first part of the interview, which was characterised by strong conversational flow containing extensive talk from Yv.

This will be followed by analysis showing that in contrast the post-51 minute section, where the topic of productivity was introduced and talked around, can be characterised as containing interactional troubles. This is to establish that there was indeed something noticeable in this phase of the interview that may have contributed to the interview not 'settling out' in the researcher's mind, so warranting very detailed analysis, and its *prima facie* nature. The methods used for this demonstration are set out in the next section, 6.7.

The final stage of the analysis is then to perform a detailed conversation analysis of the post-51 minute phase, based on conversational analytic objects drawn from the literature. The rationale for the choice of this method and the method itself are outlined in the subsequent section, 6.8.

## 6.7 THE METHOD OF IDENTIFYING 'INTERACTIONAL TROUBLES'

The method of identifying that the passage in the interview with Yv which dealt with the topic of productivity was one that could be characterised as demonstrating 'interactional troubles' is as follows.

Firstly, the researcher shows that the intervention of the respondent in the post-interview 'strip' (Warren *et al.* 2003) pointed towards this passage as being somehow different from the rest of the interview.

Secondly, a difference was evident from the transcript in the relative length of the researcher's and Yv's talk before and after minute 51 of the interview, and this difference is quantifiably demonstrated through a statistical analysis of turn length.

Thirdly, the nature of the before and after talk is shown to be different by a comparison of the post-51 minute passage with the earlier excerpts from the more free-flowing part of the interview.

Finally, this difference is shown to be characterisable as one connected with 'interactional trouble' through comparison with two published examples of interactional trouble within interviews, Rapley (2001) and Sarangi (2000). Similar characteristics are identified across the three cases.

These similarities are a high frequency of *pauses*, high levels of *insistence* on conversational direction by the interviewer by for example repeatedly repeating or re-stating a question, and *overlapping talk* or the cutting across of one participant's talk by another.

In addition, the questions that are associated with the start of the interactional troubles in each of these three cases seem to be from an extra-local agenda. That is, the question may not have flowed naturally from the preceding conversation.

In the case of the interview with Yv, it is the introduction of the primary research topic of productivity. In the case of the Rapley example, the interviewer asks a question concerning 'the exercise with the cards', which refers to an exercise used elsewhere in the research programme (2001: 311-312). For the oral medical exam, the question represents a switch from

one phase of the interview to one concerning the doctor's personality (Sarangi 2000: 8).

These three cases of 'interactional troubles' may therefore all be examples of 'markedly forced shifts in topic', a phenomenon that can occur in the semi-structured interview format as has been noted by ten Have (2007: 190).

The three common elements of pauses, insistence and cutting across are then shown to be characterisable as 'trouble' within a conversational context by reference to the conversation analysis literature which, stemming from Sacks's ground-breaking work in the 1960's, empirically analyses the context-dependent interactional pragmatics of talk.

The sources referred to are, respectively, Sacks (1992a: 772) for pauses and the pace of talk; Sacks (1992b: 413) on the delicacies of repeating questions and ten Have on typical degrees of question repetition found in research interviews (2007: 186); and Schegloff and Sacks (1973: 293 in ten Have 2007: 19) on the basic conversational rule that only one party speaks at a time, ten Have (2007: 199) on 'organizational problems' such as 'interruptions, simultaneous starts', and Sacks (1992a: 746) on the difficulties of misplacing 'continuers'.

Here, continuer is used to refer to utterances such as 'mm hm', 'uh huh', 'yeah', and so on, which are used by the listener to indicate that s/he is listening and that the talker should continue (Sacks 1992b: 9; ten Have 2007: 217). It should be noted that the particular continuer discussed in detail, ' mm. ', can have a double-life as a topic-shifter as well as a continuer (Rapley 2001: 314 referencing Gardner 1997) and so features under 'insistence' as well as 'overlapping talk'.

## 6.8 THE METHOD OF CONVERSATION ANALYSIS

Having demonstrated in this way that the post-51st minute passage concerning productivity is one characterisable as containing ‘interactional troubles’, the researcher then uses *conversation analysis* to analyse why. The researcher is using conversation analysis for a specific principal reason within the ethnographic matrix, to identify why the interview with Yv did not settle out in his mind. That is, to try and isolate the strangeness in it.

To achieve this aim, the researcher has used documented conversation analytic elements to identify the commonplace parts of the conversation, that can accordingly be discounted as not strange. The purpose is to identify what elements of the interview stand out against the normal ‘“order of conversation” ’ (ten Have 2007: 3), always taking into account that it is a particular type of conversation, the research interview.

Ten Have describes how conversation analysis can be applied to ‘elucidate the routine practices as well as some of the “problems” that may arise in [a] particular field of study’ (2007: 11), and here the hope is that conversation analysis may reveal the ‘routineness’ not only of routine practice but also of certain interactional troubles that may commonly occur in research interviews, or as Hutchby and Wooffitt put it ‘orderly (or even apparently disorderly) turn-taking’ (2008: 41).

Such elucidation together with any *non-routine* strangeness that may remain *un-elucidated* will be a possible resource for understanding why the interview had a powerful effect on the researcher, and together with any topic-related content that emerged in the interview and subsequently stayed with the researcher post-analysis will contribute to the ethnographic understanding of how the researcher developed a new subjectivity towards the cognitive topic of productivity. These ethnographic concerns are taken up again in Chapter 9.

This section consists of five subsections. The researcher first sets out as background in subsection 6.8.1 the character of research interviews as a particular or peculiar type of conversation, making use of frame analysis for this purpose. The next subsection, 6.8.2, then sets out the detailed rationale for using conversation analysis in this case, and the main theoretic conversational analysis objects or elements that are used. The third section, 6.8.3, covers additional theoretic elements used in the analysis, and provides an overview of the sequential structure of the analysis. The fourth subsection, 6.8.4, discusses the method of analysing the limited topical content that is available, by means of membership categorisation device analysis.

The final subsection, 6.8.5, sets out two alternative trajectories that the conversation analysis might have taken, based on particularly relevant analytic examples from the literature, and why it is that these two examples have been selected. The actual detailed consideration of the merits and demerits of these possible alternative trajectories, and what might be learned from them, can be found in the final section (8.9) of the conversation analysis findings chapter, Chapter 8.

#### 6.8.1 Research interview frame analysis

Before proceeding to consideration of the method used to analyse in detail the post-51st minute passage of the researcher's interview with Yv, and its rationale, it may be helpful to the reader as background to be presented with a view of the way in which research interviews have been seen, by researchers writing from a range of theoretic perspectives, to differ from other conversations.

Research interviews can be viewed as multi-layered social constructs. The particular type can be described in terms of *frame analysis* (van den Berg 1996, Ensink 2003). Van den Berg (1996) sets out a three frame structure for conceptualising the interactive nature of the interview. These are: an

interview frame, encapsulating the question-answer structure of interview conversations; the personal interaction frame between the interviewer and the respondent; and a social research frame, encapsulating features related to the 'general aims of the research' (1996: 14).

The social research frame is important, because as van den Berg shows respondents can work to understand what the aims of the interviewer(s) are, and these understandings allow a respondent to have 'a clear conjecture about the intended question behind the presented question' (van den Berg 1996: 20).

Ensink (2003) takes and develops van den Berg's structure. The social research frame encapsulates both 'provid[ing] data for some research project' and the fact that the interview is not self-standing but is 'one within a series of similar occasions' (2003: 158-159). Ensink also adds a 'topic-related cognitive frame', which allows for a mutually understood context of background knowledge as a basis for effective communication (2003: 159).

This development of the social research frame is of interest as it means that respondents may be aware that what they say will be subject to some further process of analysis, and in the process their statements may be compared in some way to what others say. Ensink gives an example where the interviewer makes explicit reference to comparison between respondents' statements (2003: 159).

Holstein and Gubrium (2003: 77) also give an example where the respondent refers to other respondents, 'You've talked to other women about it. What do they say?' This example also shows how the respondent may be aware of in some way being judged against others:

'if I knew how others in my shoes felt, I might be able to sort things out better than I did for ya' (respondent fragment from Holstein and Gubrium 2003: 77)



In discussing this example, Holstein and Gubrium are focusing on the role of the interviewer in 'encourag[ing] the respondent to shift positions in the interview so as to explore alternative perspectives and stocks of knowledge' (2003: 77), where the respondent's 'stock of knowledge' is a concept drawn from Schutz (1967).

In discussing membership categorisation analysis, Baker (2004) also emphasises the active role of the interviewer, describing how questions 'shape how and as a member of which categories the respondents should speak' (2004: 163). Baker's language of 'moral order' locally produced, and respondents accounting as a member of a category 'for activities attached to that category', shows the slant that people's statements may be, implicitly or explicitly, judged against others' statements, and are often made in that knowledge.

From a respondent's point of view, within a research interview there may therefore be concerns around judgement against their peers to which they need to pay attention as they work to present themselves in an interview.

There is also according to Ensink (2003: 160) the potential for interference between frames. The process of using the interview frame (i.e. the accustomed roles of interviewer and respondent) to obtain information about the topic-related cognitive frame necessarily involves the social research frame and the mutual relation frame. These frames may interfere with each other - a possible source of interactional trouble. This is reminiscent of Rapley (2001: 310) describing the ' "essential tension" ' in research interviews between the 'extra-local research agenda' and the 'local in situ interaction', referencing Mazeland and ten Have (1996).

This then gives some indication of the particularities of research interviews as a type of conversation, drawing on frame analysis and other theoretical perspectives, as a background for the more detailed discussion of the

rationale of the choice of method of conversation analysis that the researcher has used, which now follows.

### 6.8.2 Rationale and main theoretic elements

Noting that the research interview may be thought of as having a multi-frame structure in which the frames may interfere, the conversation analysis undertaken in this piece of research corresponds to what ten Have terms 'applied CA [conversation analysis]' (2007: 11) which can be used to 'elucidate both the routine practices as well as some of the "problems" that may arise in that particular field of activity', the field of activity being in this case qualitative research interviewing.

The interview with Yv thus forms a 'specimen' to be examined and in this mode is not to be considered a 'statement about' or 'reflection of . . . a reality "out there" ' (ten Have 2007: 36).

The passage of conversation that is analysed in this way corresponds to a passage determined by a particular topic in which a piece of 'noticed talk' has been found - one of the ways that, as ten Have discusses, a passage may be suitably selected for conversation analysis (2007: 122-124). The topic in this case is productivity, and the 'noticed talk' is made up of the evident interactional troubles.

Hutchby and Wooffitt (2008: 88, 113) give the analysis of 'collections' and 'single case analysis' of 'extended sequences of talk' as two different ways of conducting conversation analysis. The relevant method here is the single case analysis. In the context of developing the conversation analytic method, Hutchby and Wooffitt identify reasons for doing single case analysis as being about exemplifying the robustness of findings generated from the more systematic analysis of collections. Here, though, the reason for the analysis is not about developing the conversation analytic method.

The specific reason in this case is to enable the researcher to revisit his original analysis and interpretation of the interview with Yv and to elucidate why, from an auto-ethnographic perspective, the interview with Yv left such a lasting impression on the researcher's mind, not 'settling out' with time, and why it posed significant difficulties to the researcher in its interpretation.

There is also the further possibility that such an elucidation could help the researcher understand what 'content', both topical and emotional, was taken away by himself from the interview and how this content could be interpreted, and so perhaps in some way to throw light on the researcher's original topic of enquiry, that of the usefulness of the concept of productivity in certain service sectors. The way that content may be re-analysed and re-interpreted with time is auto-ethnographically relevant to this thesis in terms of the development of the researcher's *research* subjectivity, particularly his movement from a realist to a constructionist perspective.

Rapley (2004) and Roulston (2001) provide examples of single case analyses in which conversation analysis is used to revisit a qualitative research interview originally analysed using a different method, to elucidate aspects of the qualitative research process. Rapley (2004) uses conversation analysis of an interview conducted by a third party to provide a critique of a particular way of ' "*doing* facilitative and neutral" ' in interviews. Roulston (2001) uses conversation analysis more auto-ethnographically in a reflective mode, to revisit how her original method of analysis of a research interview conducted by herself, which produced a 'naive and partial reading' (2001: 298), could be augmented and developed 'to produce an additional and different reading' (2001: 280).

Conversation analysis is good for the generation of new auto-ethnographic reflective research perspectives because it helps the researcher to step away from her/himself and her/his routine pre-occupations by providing the solid analytic grounding, using close theorised analysis of the detail of

context, through which ‘another order of data may be accessed’ (Roulston 2011: 298).

It is to produce just such a richer textured, more reflexive understanding of his interview with Yv by revisiting his original analysis and interpretation that the researcher is aiming for here. As Roulston (2011) comments, still advocating particularly the more auto-ethnographic reflective use of conversation analysis to provide more ‘mindful’ research practices:

By examining interview problems and puzzling interactions in detail, interviewers and researchers may examine the variety of actions that take place in interview contexts and what the outcomes are for the data generated (Roulston 2011: 93).

The researcher has therefore chosen to use conversation analysis reflectively, as recommended by Roulston (2011), to revisit and re-interpret his original analysis of the ‘puzzling’ aspects of the interview with Yv, in the form of a single case analysis with auto-ethnographic reflective aspects as exemplified by Roulston (2001), with a view to gaining a richer, more reflexive understanding of the *ethnographic* outcomes for ‘the data generated’.

These ethnographic outcomes concern both the topical content and how this could be interpreted, and the emotional impact on the researcher and the development of the researcher’s subjectivity. Also aligned is the development of the researcher’s *research* subjectivity, which is relevant auto-ethnographically and plays into his understanding of how the findings should be interpreted, and in consequence his reflections (ultimately) on how this research project has gone forward.

In the absence of substantiating evidential talk being available at this point of the thesis, the researcher has chosen not to document in this methodological section the specific source and reason for each of the conversation analysis objects or elements that are used in the conversation

analysis. To do so would, the researcher fears, produce empty repetitive formalism. This reflects the 'inductive' nature of the analytic frame of conversation analysis, in contrast to analytic frameworks deduced 'from the general repertoire of ideas, ideally codified in a systematic theory' that may be more common in other traditions (ten Have 2007: 30).

The specific rationales and references will therefore be held back until the findings are presented in Chapter 8. These references are drawn mainly from Sacks (1992a, 1992b), Rapley and Antaki (1998), Rapley (2001), ten Have (2007) and Sidnell (2010).

In summary form, the analysis uses the following main documented conversation analytic objects or elements.

The topic-introducing question is shown to be preceded by what Rapley and Antaki (1998: 600) describe as 'discreet talk' which 'both asserts a position and withdraws from it', which can be used in a range of circumstances to allude to a privileging knowledge asymmetry. The interpretation made here, though, is that the use of this discreet talk referencing the knowledge to which it alludes is not made in order to assert power within the interview, but to pre-warn the respondent of a *possible* situational trap.

The researcher makes extensive use of Sacks's idea of the 'project of the question' (Sacks 1992a: 56) in interpreting Yv's responses to the introduction of the topic, echoing van den Berg's (1996) idea of the social research frame as one in which respondents may work to understand the intended question behind the presented question (see preceding subsection). This is supported by consideration of preference organisation (ten Have 2007: 137) and the preference for agreement (ten Have 2007: 5 referencing Sacks 1987; Sidnell 2010: 4), as well as Sacks's arguments around *questioner-preferred answers* (Sacks 1992b: 414).

Sacks's argument is that, with questioner-preferred answers, if the answer is the preferred answer, then the questioner will proceed to develop his preferred direction of conversation. To follow this line, the answerer can simply give the short preferred answer, and the questioner will naturally develop the conversation from there. If the answer given is *not* the answer for which the preference has been indicated, then the answerer becomes free to expand his/her answer and so gain more sway in the direction the conversation takes. Sacks refers to this (in the case that 'yes' is the preferred answer) as '“yes”-period and “no”-plus'.

The researcher in this thesis argues that the answerer (in this case Yv) may be anticipating the use of this strategy by the researcher, and taking steps to avoid a particular discourse.

Also important are considerations of repair, for example of understanding, and (so the researcher argues) of re-opening a prematurely closed topic. Next turn repair initiators are discussed in the form of proffered 'candidate understanding[s]' (ten Have 2007: 134), sometimes multiple and separated by transition-relevance places, and as forms of correction-invitation devices (Sacks 1992a). The analysis of the premature topic shift calls on Sidnell (2010: 234-238) and Jefferson (1993), as well as making use of the 'next turn proof procedure' (Hutchby and Wooffitt 2008: 13) to interpret a difficult-to-elucidate turn of Yv's.

### 6.8.3 Additional elements and sequential structure

The researcher also employs more general conversation analysis elements needed for managing talk and sequences such as overlapping talk, continuers, transition-relevance places and turn-constructual units.

Additional elements made use of during the analysis are an 'insertion sequence' (Sidnell 2010: 103; Hutchby and Wooffitt 2008: 120, 169-170) instigated by the researcher to confirm and validate his orientation to Yv's

prior talk after a prematurely opened topic had been closed and Yv had continued on the original topic, and 'recognitional overlap' (Sidnell 2010: 53) used by Yv during this confirmation and validation insertion sequence to demonstrate that Yv was thinking along the same lines as the researcher. This analysis, concerning topic ambiguation and disambiguation, includes in subsection 8.6.2 a consideration of how insertion sequences are closed, making use of insertion sequence examples from Sidnell (2010), and Hutchby and Wooffitt (2008).

In addition to these theoretic elements, the researcher had available as a resource his own memories of what he was thinking at the time, and these are on occasion used to add insight to the analysis.

In the final pieces of talk around productivity, after disambiguation and confirmation of the topic and validation/dis-validation of prior talk orientations, the researcher as analyst calls on repetition used to confirm allusions, as described by Sidnell (2010: 73) and ten Have (2007: 163) based on Schegloff (1996), to support the interpretation of the topical content in these sequences.

The broad sequential structure of the conversation analysis is as follows. It starts with auto-ethnographic elucidation of what the researcher was thinking as he formulated the question that initiated the topic of productivity. It then considers how Yv may have interpreted this question, intended literally, as one with a questioner-preferred answer. There then follows a process of repair in which the literalness of the question comes to be mutually understood. Then, when Yv answers the literal question, the analysis turns to how the researcher attempted to initiate a new topic, which Yv in turn (using overlapping talk) took steps to avert.

The overlapping talk then leads to a period of topic ambiguity, and the necessary repair. This again draws on auto-ethnographic recollection in

elucidating how *in situ* the topic was ambiguous within the researcher's own mind.

After the topic disambiguation repair is completed, the analysis then shows how the researcher undertakes a repair of understanding of how he had oriented to Yv's responses during the period when the topic was ambiguous, taking the responses in declining order of the degree of certainty associated with the original *in situ* interpretation, again calling on auto-ethnographic recollection.

When this repair of understanding is complete, the final sequence is analysed as talk concerning the provision of information on the topic of productivity; that is, the purpose of the talk here is considered to be topical content-related talk, enabled by the two participants having eventually successfully achieved through the preceding complex sequences of repair processes a 'mutual orientation' (Hutchby and Wooffitt 2008: 65) to a common topic.

#### 6.8.4 Membership categorisation device analysis

As an adjunct to the sequential conversation analysis looking at how the intersubjective understanding is achieved in context, as outlined in the previous subsection, but now moving away from using the interview as a 'specimen', the researcher has also used the second main type of analysis derived from Sacks (1992a) (ten Have 2007: 43), the analysis of membership categorisation devices, to analyse this topical content-related talk.

Consideration of membership categorisation can in certain circumstances be considered part of conversation analysis proper in that it may be used to maintain orderliness within conversations, when for example an individual self-categorises themselves as an expert and thus provides a particular set of epistemic grounds on which their talk should be entertained (Hutchby



and Wooffitt 2008: 38-39) in order to avoid a time-critical conversation veering off along unnecessary lines.

There are other cases, though, where such use of expert versus non-expert categorisation is used not so much to maintain order in a local context, but to orient the topical content of a conversation towards a particular viewpoint or to put forward a particular line of argument, such as through the technique of transitivity (Wodak 2000: 191), which is more ideational than textual and would thus be more the concern of discourse analysis. So generally, in some cases members' use of categories may be about maintaining the orderliness of talk, and so a proper concern of conversation analysis; but in other cases, these categories may be considered more topic-related and so of less interest from a conversation analytic perspective.

In this case it is not clear that Yv's use of categories is for the purpose of local order maintenance, and so this part of the analysis is described as an adjunct to the conversation analysis.

For the membership categorisation device analysis, the researcher has used the concept of 'contrast pairs' as described by Baker (2004), not now in order to understand 'what went on in the interview', but from the viewpoint of the ethnographic description of the subsequent development of the researcher's own subjectivity, in order to understand what new *topical content* the researcher took from the intersubjective experience of the interview that in due course contributed to the development of his subjectivity.

For this analysis of membership categorisation devices, the researcher concentrated on those categories which were introduced by Yv. This is to try to reduce the opacity of the relevance of the analysis to Yv (ten Have 2007: 47).

And in turn, because the outcome of this membership categorisation analysis was in essence similar to the outcome of the original analysis that was used by the researcher to understand Yv's meanings (as will be discussed in Chapter 9), and which outcome played a significant role in informing or contributing to the development of the researcher's subjectivity at the time, this approach also demonstrates the intended reduction of the opacity of the relevance of the researcher's developed subjectivity to Yv.

#### 6.8.5 *Alternative analytic trajectories*

This then completes the methods of analysis that will be used. The final section of Chapter 8, section 8.9, outlines alternative conversation analytic trajectories that have been considered. Here, 'analytic trajectory' does not refer to alternative methodological approaches, but to the trajectory of the actual conversation analysis undertaken.

Because conversations are sequential, the specific interpretation of particular turns may have a strong influence on the way subsequent turns are analysed and interpreted, and so different interpretations particularly of early turns may set up a very different trajectory affecting the analysis of later phases. In addition, specific talk at particular points may heavily influence the subsequent actual direction and tone of a conversation, and so in different conversations different dynamics or trajectories may become more or less apparent; the dominant trajectory of one conversation, though, might still throw light on how an aspect of talk which is less pre-dominant in another context, and so less immediately salient in an analysis, remains relevant.

The two possible alternative trajectories considered have been chosen because of their close connection with the actual analysis undertaken. These two alternatives are firstly an analysis based on questioner-privileging knowledge differential devices used as techniques within research interviews to arrive at a presupposed research goal (Rapley and

Antaki 1998), and the emergence of moral worlds as well as answers to research questions in qualitative interviewing (Roulston 2001, also drawing on Rapley 2004).

The close connection of Rapley and Antaki (1998) with the analysis of the researcher's interview with Yv lies in the common use of discreet talk in the two cases. The nature of the link with Roulston (2001) is different, in that it is not about the common use of particular analytic elements. Rather, it is that the context of application of conversation analysis is similar, in both cases being used from a reflective, auto-ethnographic perspective to revisit and re-analyse pre-existing research data.

These alternative trajectories are not considered in greater detail here at this point for the following reasons. The particular interpretation of the discreet talk, and why the Rapley and Antaki (1998) approach was rejected, is heavily data- and context-dependent and so is better considered in the conversation analysis findings chapter, after the researcher's chosen interpretation has been fully laid out.

The learning that the researcher drew from his post-analysis consideration of the alternative analytic trajectory offered by Roulston (2001), on the other hand, is auto-ethnographically significant. It represented a separate additional step in the development of the researcher's constructionist perspective, affording him a new way of contextualising the interpretation of the topic-related content that he had derived from the interview, that happened after the conversation analysis had been completed. It is on account of this auto-ethnographic significance, and the desire to remain to a reasonable degree auto-ethnographically authentic, that the learning from this alternative trajectory is presented as a post-analysis additional step, rather than integrated into the main method of the analysis, as it could have been.

The researcher now turns in the next two chapters to presenting the findings that result from the implementation of these various methods, starting in Chapter 7 with the presentation and analysis of the earlier part of the interview with Yv and the identification of interactional troubles within the post-51st minute phase concerning the topic of productivity.

## *Chapter 7*

# Identifying interactional troubles

### 7.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter and the next implement the analysis whose method was set out in the previous chapter, and present the findings from the analysis. It is set out in three parts, the first two contained in sections in this chapter, and the third part making up the next chapter.

The first part is in the following section and looks at the first 51 minutes of the interview, presenting two extended excerpts and one shorter one. The purpose of this is fourfold.

To give a picture of Yv and where she worked; to establish the relevance of her work organisation and role to the target research population; thirdly to allow the reader to see for her/himself the degree to which the post-51 minute passage of the interview, when the researcher initiated the topic of productivity, was different from the first 51 minutes; and fourthly to provide a resource against which to compare the nature of the post-51st minute phase.

The second part in section 7.3 then establishes that the post-51 minute section can be characterised as one containing interactional troubles. This is done firstly by reporting how, after the interview was complete, Yv herself identified a change towards the end; then by describing and reporting how the relative turn length between Yv and the researcher changed around the 51 minute mark; then through comparison of the post-51st minute phase with the earlier part of the interview; and then through comparison with other published examples of interview troubles, Example 1 from Sarangi (2000) and Extracts 2, 3 and 1b from Rapley (2001).

This latter comparison is done in two stages. Firstly, three possible structural elements of talk that might be characteristic of interactional troubles are obtained through a comparison of the interview with Yv and Example 1 from Sarangi (2000). These are pauses, repetition and cutting across.

Then these elements are looked at in turn to see whether they are present in all three passages of talk, and whether they can be identified as characteristic of interactional trouble from the conversation analysis literature.

This process securely identifies the post-51st minute passage of talk around the topic of productivity in the interview with Yv as one containing interactional troubles. The final part of the analysis, presented in Chapter 8, then contains a detailed conversation analysis of this talk, looking particularly at how the topic-initiating question was asked and how the consequences played out.

This next chapter concludes in terms of *topical content* that the main jointly-constructed meanings that potentially may be taken from the passage are a number of contrast pairs, that essentially link the researcher's understandings as he entered the interview with a view of the world informed by Yv's experiences in her workplace, though there is no evidence that these contrast pairs would have come to exist outside the research interview context. That is, in as much as they are real, they may have been constructed within the interview.

There are also significant pieces of talk that seem to be *uninterpretable*. They may from a realist standpoint refer to unknown externalities or internalities, or from a constructionist standpoint they may be artefacts that enact consequences within the interview context. It is (eventually) the latter

that the researcher subscribes to, but this has been something of a journey on which the viva was a critical way-station.

But the most important conclusion concerns the source of the interactional troubles and the strangeness (to the researcher) of the interview, that these stem in the main from attempts to establish intersubjectivity through repair firstly of the understanding of the question that was asked, and secondly to enable the reopening of a prematurely closed topic, a closure that had been initiated during overlapping talk.

## 7.2 THE FIRST 51 MINUTES - ESTABLISHING RELEVANCE

So before progressing to a detailed analysis of the passage of the interview that relates to productivity, it is useful to have a summary of Yv's work context and in particular a description of the training and quality context. This will establish the relevance of the organisation where Yv works to the target research population by establishing that the work context is in accord with that specified in the research question.

At the same time, the researcher will show how Yv's work and her approach is situated in regard to the research discussed in the literature review.

### 7.2.1 Summary of Yv's work context

Yv works at a third sector organisation, funded through public grants, that offers a first point of call for those who have abused substances such as drugs or alcohol, but who now wish to take the steps to re-integrate back into society. Many of the clients have multiple associated problems, such as homelessness, worklessness or family issues. The organisation is not a main provider of services, but rather offers a sign-posting service so that its clients may access, and be supported in accessing, whatever services they may need. The organisation is referred to as 'Response and Reintegration' (R&R).

This section includes two extended excerpts from the interview of around nine minutes each, as well as a third shorter one of a couple of minutes. The whole interview lasted just over 55 minutes. The first excerpt is used to illustrate the role of training, networking and trust in Yv's work organisation, the second excerpt considers the nature of quality, and the third excerpt returns again to the need for continuous training, networking and trust to maintain the level of service. Note that Excerpt 1, concerning training, occurred between Excerpt 2 and Excerpt 3 during the actual interview.

The inclusion of these extended excerpts is to allow the reader to get a feel for how the first 51 minutes of the interview developed and flowed, and to help the reader judge for her/himself the ways in which the passage of 'interactional troubles' that followed, which contained the discussion around productivity, varied from the majority of the research interview. The descriptions that follow are based on the researcher's first transcript of the interview, which did not include conversation analysis annotations.

### 7.2.2 The role of training

There are two key elements to training. The first is to ensure that all the organisation's workers have current knowledge of the type of problems that clients may present with. As these problems may change rapidly, for example if new types of drugs become popular, it is important that the training is continuous. The second important aspect of training, understood in a general way, is to be able to network with a wide range of local service organisations, whose services R&R's clients may need to use.

The networking is to ensure face-to-face knowledge of the people that R&R's clients may need to be passed on to. Because personal contact and knowledge is the key, the need for this training and participation in mutual development events is also continuous. An additional function of training, particularly the induction training that all staff undergo, is to promote the culture and vision of R&R, and to seek to ensure that there is a consistency



of approach across all staff so that, though initially a client's relationship is with a particular member of staff, there is sufficient consistency engendered that the client will also learn to trust and be confident in dealing with or seeking help from others too.

Excerpt 1 shows the transcript of part of the passage of the interview concerning the topic of training on which these observations are based. The excerpt shows the four turns before the topic is changed to that of training, starting from the 17 minute mark into the interview. This extended excerpt runs through to shortly after the 25 minute mark, eight or nine minutes in length.

In the excerpt, Yv's turns are marked by 'Yv', while the researcher's turns are marked by 'A' (for Alex). The excerpt illustrates well the mode of conversation typical for the first 51 minutes of the interview. After an initial question from the researcher, Yv would give extended answers, interleaved with short continuers from the researcher, such as 'right', and some short clarifying questions (e.g. 'food hygiene?' c. minute 19, or 'itep?' c. minute 22).

The researcher also asks a number of probing or clarifying questions of somewhat longer length, and also makes some summarising statements or restatements, such as 'ok so they're going to cascade it' c. minute 22, or 'so that's helping with ensuring that the client has trust in the organization?' c. minute 24. These longer researcher turns do not though significantly dampen the flow of Yv's talk.

The introduction here into the interview of the word 'trust' by the researcher is of interest. This is in the course of a summarising restatement presented to Yv in the form of a question. 'Trust' as a summarising concept is brought forward by the researcher from the literature review. Such summarising statements within interviews are described in the conversation analysis

literature as ‘formulations’ (Hutchby and Wooffitt 2008: 147-149, referencing Heritage 1985).

Formulations, usually undertaken by the questioner and ‘usually in pursuit of some controversial or newsworthy aspect’ (in the context of news interviews), may either be ‘cooperative recyclings’ or vehicles for expressing evaluation or criticism without the questioner having to make explicit a personal stance, and are generally composed with respect to awareness of an overhearing audience, and essentially involve a claim that the proposed formulation is implicit in the co-participant’s prior talk. A key aspect is that they ‘make relevant in the next turn a response in which the recipient either agrees or disagrees with the version being put forward’ (Hutchby and Wooffitt 2008: 149).

In this case, the ‘newsworthy aspect’ of ‘trust’ is the connection with the academic literature on the credence property of service quality and the ‘overhearing audience’ is the prospective readership of the researcher’s thesis. The next turn does not show Yv responding to the relevance of agreement or disagreement through the expression of disagreement, but simple agreement in the form of ‘yes’.

And in fact, Yv does not show any trouble in incorporating the word into her subsequent talk, for example shortly afterwards ‘and that they know that what you say about trust that they can talk to any member of staff’, and later (see Excerpt 3 c. minute 31) ‘because you’re building that trust with the person, and then you’re passing them on to somebody else’.

So while the use of the word is not originated by Yv, but is in response to the researcher’s use within a ‘formulation’, Yv demonstrates a facility to incorporate it into meaningful sentences, very much in contrast with another word introduced by the researcher, ‘productivity’, as will be discussed in detail in the following sections.

However, this accommodation is not unmarked by Yv. The accommodation of the word 'trust' does show some features of repetition of a previous implication, whereby a repetition by participant 1 of a statement by participant 2 can be used to acknowledge that participant 2 has correctly picked up an implication previously deliberately implied but not made explicit by participant 1 (ten Have 2007: 163, Sidnell 2010: 73, based on Schegloff 1996).

The differences with the ten Have/Schegloff characterisation are that the repetition does not happen in Yv's next turn, which is 'yes', but Yv's following turn, and that Yv also incorporates what she herself had previously said in the earlier turn rather than purely repeating what the researcher had said. Yv's use of 'trust' is also accompanied by an optional preface, 'what you say about trust', perhaps indicating that Yv wants to maintain on view that she is not *responsible* for the use of the word trust (Rapley 2001: 314).

Thus, this taking up by Yv has some caveats, and is perhaps done in a way to show that she is initially trying out the equivalence of her sayings and the researcher's paraphrasing or summary, rather than for example recognising the correct picking up of an implicit meaning she had *intended* to be picked up.

*Excerpt 1 from interview with Yv: the role of training*

A right. So there's feedback to the board

Yv yes, and the funders . . . there's a meeting, I can't remember how frequent it is, and bearing in mind I'm getting it wrong because I've only recently gone into post and seen the bigger picture. But where our funders come in, um, and do kind of like an audit, and I don't remember because I've only sat on one and I was so scared that all I wanted was to present what I had to present and then get out, and you don't – it's not everybody in at the same time. You're all sort of like, and I can't quite remember

A so you're not sure whether they get client feedback from it

Yv no I've only done it once

17.00

A so that gives a good view of how you approach quality in the organization. So the next topic is how, given that, how does training and education contribute to your organization improving its effectiveness in terms of helping you . . . so this is education and training not for your clients but for staff. How does it help you deliver the service and achieve your primary goal of getting your clients reintegrated into society?

Yv training is one of the big agendas at our organization. And it's really weird because we haven't actually got a funding slot for training, but every member of staff is trained to a very high quality. So it starts really from the induction stage, so when we've sort of done recruitment we kind of gather what training the individual's already taken – education and training – and because we have a standard for each role at a level of qualification that is needed for that role.

A right

Yv so at recruitment the candidate has got to prove that they are willing to undertake the training that we say, our core training for the organization. There is certain training that is set, the basics of child protection, vulnerable adults, there's a few more, there'll be about eight, health and safety's one of them. There's about eight core training

A food hygiene?

Yv we don't have to do food hygiene, that is optional, because what we also have is a continual development protocol for all workers. They have their own folder, everyone's given a folder at induction, and it is about their continual development. So we have the core training and at induction, I mean things like health and safety that goes beyond saying, that comes up they have to prove their competence within that within the first three months of employment. So depending on where they're at when they come in is what we're

working with. Um, I mean in terms of first aid they just need the basics.

A right

20.03

Yv so that's provided and we have a college that is prepared to come in and do training for our staff. Um but if it's – it depends where we're at – if it's where there's a batch that needs updating, we'll get them to sit on that. But if an update isn't ready we'll send them off and they do that individually. So yeah, within the first three months there's a core set of training that has to be completed or working towards

A right

Yv um and so when they do the first appraisal, that is also a point where we can talk and discuss, find out maybe any difficulties in arranging training , cancellations holidays and all that. So we find out where the person's at with the core training. Um. I'm kind of responsible for making sure that the training is done so generally I know where to go who to contact and to get people on them quite quickly. I'd like to get those through within the first three months because that's the time when they're settling into the organization, they're not quite sure and it also gives them an opportunity to meet people in the community, to find out about other organizations in the community, which is essential for our job because we're referring all the time.

A oh right, so networking and

21.40

Yv networking is a big one with training and so that's why we don't do all our training in house. Wherever possible we do so that they can network. However there's also the development of the individual because like something like where they're doing itep training

A itep?

Yv yeah, don't ask me [what itep stands for]. . . it's a mapping for clients, their journey through the recovery system and again this is a training that's been developed and recommended by the national treatment agency

A right

22.20

Yv so this is new to us. We've had two of our service ah um staff go on the two day training and then they're going to deliver training to the rest of the staff

A ok so they're going to cascade it

Yv yuu so again that's improving their development skills, and so we do a lot of training like that as well

A so what what impact are you hoping there will be on the organization from that training?

Yv from the training? It's better um a more uniformed approach to the service that's delivered so that we know that every client that comes in – yes, they've got different needs, but there's a tool that you can measure that everyone has been given the same opportunities

23.20

A right, so is that to avoid the situation where an individual might fall through because soething had been omitted?

Yv yeah, and to capture everything. So once you've captured that then it's your choice it's between you and the client to work out which one is the best approach for you, but they've all had . . . you don't then get . . . because there's a drop in centre as well, it's a kind of drop in centre where the clients meet with one another and peer support an that and then they don't turn round and say, well no you need to ask for him as your key worker because you get . . . y'now . . . so they're all getting the same thing so it doesn't matter who your key worker is, you're getting a quality support.

A so that's helping with ensuring that the client has trust in the organization?

24.16

Yv yes

A and the individual that that person is dealing with?

Yv yeah and that they know that what you say about trust that they can talk to any member of staff

A right

24.29

Yv and they're going to get basically the same . so it's not, um, you go to him and he's gonna say oh yeah I can do this for you, where you go to that person and say no you can't. because whatever he can deliver that person over there can deliver also

A so is that kindof client trust, is that an important part of the successful relationship

Yv oh yeah. Yeah because we're very fortunate, generally if one asks for a change of keyworker, it's more around a personal preference, like a female wanting another female worker as opposed to someone wanting a change of key worker because they don't feel they're getting the service. We're very very fortunate in that sense, um and we want to keep that standard up. That y'know I can turn round to any of the staff and say can you go and see that person

A right

25.35

Yv and know that the person is in good hands

The characteristics of training needs shown in Excerpt 1 have a strong affinity to those presented in Olivet *et al.* (2010), who researched the training needs of multi-disciplinary teams addressing chronic homelessness in the USA.

Olivet *et al.* characterise the homeless client group as having multiple inter-related problems, and describe the need for ongoing training to develop 'new clinical skills' and the maintenance of 'core competencies'. They also describe the use of staff shadowing to support induction (2010: 234) and the importance of involvement of current or recent clients in developing the service (2010: 236), both approaches used by R&R. 'Close communication' with property managers was important for the organisations researched by Olivet *et al.* (2010: 231), but it seems there was less emphasis on personal networking with a wide range of services than is the case for R&R.

### 7.2.3 Quality and trust

The importance of personal networking at R&R is related to quality. While R&R do need to return statistics and measures of outcomes to their funders, their stock-in-trade is trust. It is the trust between the service user and R&R that keeps the service user on track. Two excerpts are used to illustrate this.

The first of these, Excerpt 2, is an extended excerpt lasting from around minute 3 to around minute 12 during which the researcher and Yv mainly discuss measurable ways of assessing quality. In this excerpt, a number of measures for assessing the quality of the service are used, primarily for the benefit of those who fund the programme. The organisation itself tends to use more customer-focused methods of assessing quality, such as focus groups (c. minute 11).



This excerpt is important because in it Yv introduces two words that later occur during the more difficult discussion on productivity, 'success' c. minute 4 and 'box' in the form of 'tick box' shortly after minute 10.

The second, shorter, excerpt (Excerpt 3) which comes later on in the interview illustrates how training is seen to impact on quality through building trust through networking.

Excerpt 2 from interview with Yv: assessing quality

Yv: we're aiming to get them back into the community, integrate them back into the community, and that is done through education, training and employment

A: of the individuals?

Yv: of the individuals

A: so when you're delivering the service, what do you see as the key aspects of quality, how do you judge whether the service you are delivering to your service users/clients is good

Yv: well clearly we have targets we have to reach, and that's not necessarily to the interests of the client, but we've got to reach those so their our benchmark

A: so they're targets for the purposes of funding?

Yv: funding. So that's the amount of assessments we do, the retention rate,

A: the retention rate?

Yv: sorry?

A: what do you mean by retention?

Yv: retention – how long . . .

A: sorry if some of these questions sound stupid

Yv: how long someone stays in treatment. The National treatment agency set a target that if someone hasn't reached sixteen weeks then its unlikely that they're going to be successful

3.47

. . . so we're looking at between sixteen and twenty eight weeks

A to retain somebody on the program

Yv yep and the success rate is clearly how many people are getting to well employment is the biggest one but its education, training of various types. Some of the education we would provide ourselves . NVQs only up to a level two though. And then we provide support for volunteering so that they can get some work experience. And they're out main targets really. So that's how we evaluate how successful we are, if someone completes

4.39

A right so the success rate is a measure that is set by the external funders?

Yv yes

A is it something that you or your organization think is a valid .... A good measure of quality?

Yv it depends. Some of the measures are really good and useful. Others because we are an aftercare service don't really apply to us but we've still got y'know its not taken in precisely what we do, so we cant quantify it in terms of someone like the john storer clinic who provides medical treatment, methadone subutex needle exchange and so forth. Because we don't provide anything like that we cant match against how many people have been on methadone, and the length of time that they have been on methadone, coming off and moving on. So we cant measure things like that but we do measure in terms of someone coming in what stage they're at at the start of their journey

A right

5.45

Yv and the value of the impact that [Response and Reintegration] has made, so without [Response and Reintegration] would they have had the same outcome. And if not how long would that . . . so if they say got onto a course and they were successful in the course what we do is we try and do a questionnaire after they've completed the course to find out to what value the course had on them

A right so you're asking the client what they thought about the course

Yv yuu

A and what are the kind of aspects of that feedback you get from your clients that you think is important in terms of whether its good or not? What are you looking for them to say?

Yv well we're wanting to know that its appropriate for them

A right

Yv so and that they've got something out of it that they can use in their future

A does what that is it depends from person to person?

Yv person to person, and so we try and tailor what we provide to the needs of the individual. So its no good putting someone on a bricklaying course if they've got no interest there. But what we have to consider as well we have people in from different walks of life, who have been through employment, some of them have had very substantial jobs, but that has been the cause of their substance use

A right

Yv so its about changing careers round and getting them to change their culture, the way of their thinking. Umm and then to look at the

skills that they've got, and where it can be matched in another field and support them through that

A right, so so the situation you're describing sounds like first of all you have to build up a picture of that particular person

Yv yuu

A and then to understand whether what you're doing is working for them? You need various types of feedback, some of it formal like a questionnaire, presumably other more informal

8.04

Yv yeah when they come to us we do the assessment and we design a careplan for them, and that careplan is reviewed on a monthly basis

A person to person?

Yv person to person. So they'll go off and whatever it is and the we'll call them in after a month, and review how that's going. And again there might be some input that we need to do and its also checking out did we complete what we said we'd do in order for you to do what you needed to do

A right

Yv so it's a two way process, the careplan. So after the three months careplan what we're expecting is for them to design their own careplan and to move forward with it with less input from us

A right

Yv so then y'know we're there then for guidance rather than input

A so if you're ... so to a degree the quality of the service that you're providing is how much the client can make something of and relate to the things that you're offering. So then do you try and work out, given that quite complex situation, how well you're providing that

type of service? I mean is something like a success rate – that's quite a crude measure? Do you have other ways of looking at it?

Yv yuu the main thing is we start the careplan with us agreeing to work together. Success for me is when they can see for themselves and start working the careplan themselves, so id ont have an input – *they're* saying what *they're* going to be doing, and they're actually doing it, and coming back and telling us the success from them being able to do it themselves

10.05

A ok, so how . . . do you have a way of assessing how well you're getting people on to that stage? From the point of view of how you would improve the service you could offer? Do you have a way of looking at or is it just . . .

Yv again that's back to where the pen and paper side of our business is because its tick boxes unfortunately. We use a lot of tickboxes

A four whose benefit?

Yv for our funders

A right. How do you – the organization itself – how do you assess whether you're doing not just with one client but with a number of clients whether there are ways in which the service could be improved?

Yv yeah, because we do have client involvement. We have focus groups which is client orientated

A right

Yv so they get together and talk about what the service is providing, what it should be providing, umm, what they're benefiting from, what they're not. So anything we do is sort of – goes through the focus group, which is client led

The second excerpt illustrating the nature of quality in the organization, Excerpt 3 below, returns to the topic of trust, and shows how the use of training to network is crucial in building up organisation-to-organisation, person-to-person trust, so that when a client is referred to another organisation, the R&R staff member can have confidence in the client being able to trust the person to whom they are referred.

So that, towards the end of this excerpt, Yv says 'and also to know the organization, which is why again I say the networking is really good, because you're building that trust with the person, and then you're passing them on to somebody else'. But note that again the actual word 'trust' has been introduced locally by the researcher, three turns earlier, and Yv puts an optional preface of 'that' before trust, perhaps indicating that though she is happy to use it, she doesn't quite own it.

*Excerpt 3 from interview with Yv: networking to build trust*

Yv to know what's effective, because you can't treat an heroin user the same ways you treat a crack user

A right

Yv and the same goes for the now um legal highs which is the new drug that's on the market. And because they're new we know very little about them until things start to happen, and so it's about us getting informed. Where's it come from, what experience have they had out there, and so that there's a lesson and we're not falling in the same . . .

A so that's really a continuous thing

Yv continuous

A and do you have the same thing with methods of treatment, and different ways of treatment? Do those change?

Yv yeah, and again it's knowing what is appropriate treatment. Because we don't actually provide treatment per se, but it's knowing

where to refer a person. Because the last thing you want is to get someone into your organization, they might have spent three, four months just bucking up the courage to walk through the door

A yeah

Yv and then you just pass them on to somewhere else, and if you pass them on to the wrong place, you might lose them again for another three months, so you've got to get it right. Um and it's not

A so that's almost about trust again

Yv again, yeah

A or I suppose almost self confidence, or confidence in the individual

Yv a lot of confidence, a lot of confidence. And also to know the organization, which is why again I say the networking is really good, because you're building that trust with the person, and then you're passing them on to somebody else

31.03

A yeeah

Yv there's got to be a level of trust between that . . .

A so presumably then not only through the induction is it good to send them out for training but also for the ongoing training helps build

Yv yes that's why I say a lot of training to build the staff up and to empower them, we encourage the staff to cascade down, but we also like them to go out

A right

In addition to customer/client feedback, for example through focus groups, Yv describes how there are internal-to-the-organisation paper-based systems for monitoring and maintaining quality, but the system is not the aim – ‘a lot of it is tickbox, but again it’s about the character of the individual delivering that tick’ (c. minute 42, not included in excerpts).

In terms of trust, Olivet *et al.* also highlight in their study the importance of improving ‘the teams’ ability to engage and build trust with clients who have been disconnected from relationships and services’ (2010: 236). Engendering, building and maintaining this trust, and the confidence that goes with it, are, in Parasuraman *et al.*’s scheme, credence properties to do with security and confidentiality (1985: 47).

Also associated with quality is the nature of staff motivation. Li *et al.* highlight the importance of a ‘service attitude’, having an ‘internal passion for their job’ (2009: 1766). Yv declares ‘I love my job’ (c. minute 51, see Excerpt 4), and this as Billett and Somerville say is ‘a storyline common to all levels of care workers’ quoting one worker as saying ‘I just love it. I just love being with the residents’ (2004: 314).

#### 7.2.4 Summary of pre-51st minute phase

In summary, the context of training at R&R is close to the picture presented in the USA by Olivet *et al.* (2010) in organisations addressing similar client groups. The important aspects of quality at R&R are in line with Parasuraman *et al.*’s (1985) credence properties, and so R&R fulfils the research criterion of being an organisation where quality is subjectively determined.

In addition, there are strong connections with the research literature on other aspects of quality, particularly motivation. The exception is the emphasis at R&R on continuous training and development designed to support face-to-face networking, and the researcher judges that this is



probably because R&R specialises as a sign-posting service and so has a greater need than most to liaise with and pass clients on to a wide range of other service organisations.

The extended excerpts shown in this section illustrate the characteristic mode of the first phase of the interview of topic-introducing questions spoken by the researcher followed by a flow of relatively long, fluent answers from Yv, interspersed with continuers, clarifying and probing questions, and some summarising statements and restatements by the researcher, though these do not tend to interrupt the general flow of Yv's replies.

These characteristics are very different from those evident in the passage during which the research topic of productivity is introduced, from minute 51 onwards. This passage is characterised by 'interactional troubles' such as long pauses, repeated questions and overlap. The next stage of the research is to consider in more detail how the researcher has securely identified this passage as one that can be characterised as containing 'interactional troubles' in this way, in contrast to the more free flowing first 51 minutes of the interview.

### 7.3 IDENTIFYING INTERACTIONAL TROUBLES

The previous section has summarised the relevant results from the the first 51 minutes of the interview with Yv, prior to the discussion on productivity. Productivity was not mentioned by Yv in this first phase, and so following the planned method the researcher turned the interview towards an explicit discussion of productivity.

At this point, the nature of the interview changed. This section shows how the researcher identified the ensuing passage as one characterised by *interactional troubles*.

### 7.3.1 Identification through internal inconsistency

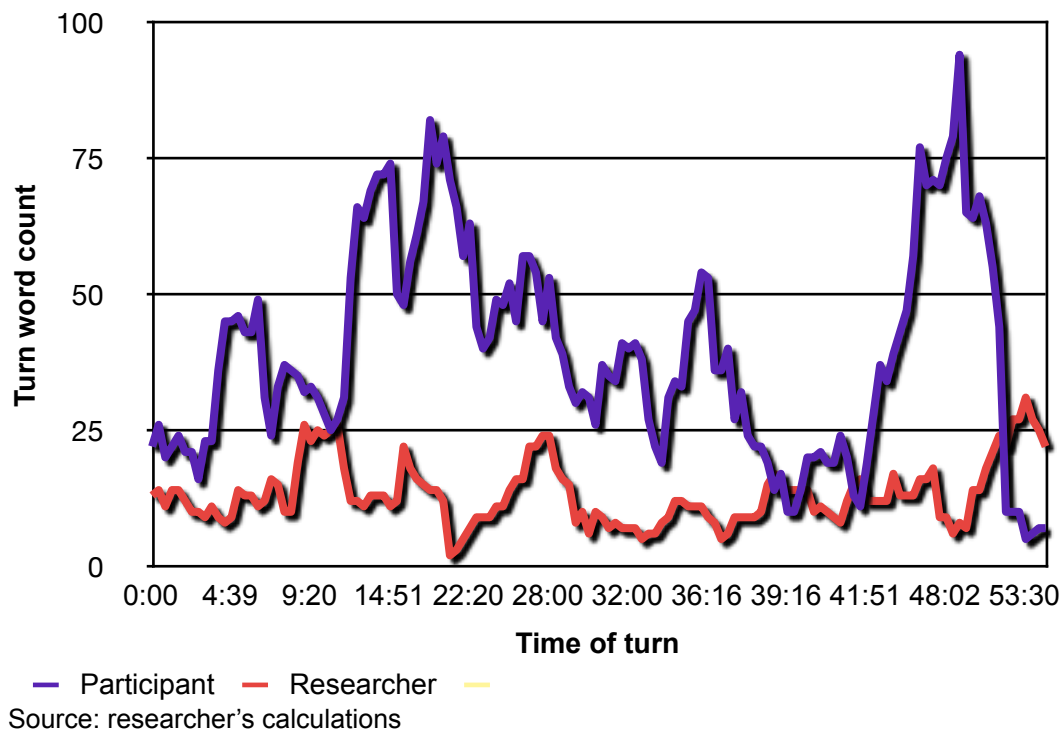
This identification was through a number of methods. Firstly, Yv herself pointed up the different character of the final part of the interview in the “after the interview” . . . “strip” of time’ (Warren *et al.* 2003: 93 referencing Goffman 1974: 10).

Warren *et al.* argue that the strip of time between the formal end of the interview and leave taking is ‘realer to the respondent in the Goffmanic sense of connected to self – rather than interviewer – relevances’ (2003: 107). In this case, the participant chose to exercise this switch in frames to point to the nature of the ending of the interview, identifying in some way its unnaturalness.

The second way was that a brief glance through the transcript showed that during the discussion on productivity, Yv’s answers were shorter than in the remainder of the interview.

This effect can be shown more formally by calculating the length of the turn in terms of the average word count per turn for each of the co-participants, and looking at how this measure changes during the course of the interview. A seven-turn moving average of turn word count is used, so that for each turn the word count is added to the word count of the three preceding and the three succeeding turns, and the average taken, as shown in Figure 1.

*Figure 1: Chart showing seven-turn moving average of turn word count*



A clear picture of the interview emerges from this statistical analysis of turn length. During the first 51 minutes, the researcher's word count averages around ten words per turn, while Yv's word count starts at 20 and then moves higher, with several local maxima as she gets into her stride on some topic that is of particular interest to her. This reflects Baker's observation that in research interviews:

In such interviews a more asymmetrical organization of talk is usually seen, with the interviewer asking questions or making probes, while the interviewee talks at more length to supply the information sought (Baker 2004: 168).

Strong examples of this local organisation of talk have been given in Excerpts 1 and 2.

On a couple of occasions, around minute 40 and minute 42, Yv's word count per turn drops to around ten briefly, before increasing again. On the first of these occasions, the researcher is seeking clarification on his

understanding about how child protection training links with induction training, and on the second is seeking clarification on his understanding about the link between induction training and organisational culture.

Just after minute 51, the pattern changes. Yv's turn word count drops below ten for the first time and stays there until the end of the interview, while the researcher's word count rises above 20 and again stays high until the end of the interview.

This period represents the only time during the interview when the researcher's moving average turn word count is significantly higher than Yv's for any length of time, and is thus different from Baker's observation quoted above that 'the interviewee talks at more length' than the interviewer (2004: 168).

The character of this passage can be typified by Yv's initial response to the researcher's opening question introducing the topic of productivity, which was itself long and included ten pauses with one lasting a second and a half (shown in Excerpt 4 below). Yv's response was ' .pt <productivity> (2) umm:: it's '.

This response, represented using conversation analysis annotation (see Appendix 2), consists of a slight lipsmack, followed by 'productivity' repeated slowly, followed by a two second pause, followed by the spacer 'um' with the final 'm' sound stretched out, followed by the beginning of an answer (' it's ').

These two turns are in contrast to the introduction of the topic of quality, which happens in the fourth and fifth turns of Excerpt 2 (above). There the question, while still quite long and also delivered with almost as many pauses, perhaps because it was the first more general topic introduced, did not contain a long pause of over a second, and Yv's initial answer, while

also starting with a slight lipsmack or pursing of the lips, moved immediately thereafter into talk containing coherent content, without any long pauses.

### 7.3.2 Comparison with published examples

The final means of establishing the nature of the post-51 minute passage is by comparing it with published examples of interactional troubles within interview situations. Two such published examples are used, Example 1 from Sarangi (2000: 8) and the combination of Extracts 2, 3, 1b (run together in that order) from Rapley (2001). The Sarangi example is from an oral medical exam, and the Rapley example is from a research interview.

The original presentations of these two published examples stem from slightly different motivations. Sarangi's interest in presenting his example was to discuss how self definition of situation is used by the candidate in the oral medical exam as a means of categorisation to negotiate a 'situational trap' (2000: 10) in which he is expected to assert how his personality is suitable for medical practice, in contravention to normal conversational rules concerning boasting (and in contrast to the apparently preceding rules of the interview in which statements needed to be backed by scientific evidence) (Sarangi 2000: 7-8).

Rapley's interest in presenting his excerpts from research interviewing is to position the interviewer's work in co-constructing the picture of reality that is presented within research interviews more centrally in the analysis of interview data (2001: 306). The example taken is that of an interviewer doing 'facilitative and neutral' interviewing, in a passage during which the respondent eventually confides that he has taken drugs, seemingly without overt direction from the interviewer.

Rapley then uses detailed conversational analysis to demonstrate the artful work undertaken by the interviewer, highlighting the difference between doing (or appearing to be) 'facilitative and neutral' and being 'facilitative and

neutral' (2001: 316). This example is of particular interest here because it is a research interview, as is the interview with Yv.

Turning now to the comparison, the 19-turn sequence from the interview with Yv from around the 51st minute onwards made up of turns 01 to 19 in Excerpt 4 (given in the next chapter, section 8.1) is of broadly similar length to the two published examples.

The comparison proceeds by first using the Sarangi excerpt for an initial detailed analysis of this 19-turn sequence to identify what kind of elements might be indicative of interactional trouble. This is discussed in the next subsection (7.3.3).

The following subsection (7.3.4) then considers what elements of interactional trouble actually are common between the *three* examples, which are found to be pauses, cutting across or overlap, and insistence. This is complemented with a subsection detailing how insistence is enacted in the Rapley excerpts and a subsection showing how insistence may be seen to contravene conversational rules. The final subsection (7.3.7) gives an overall summary of how 'interactional troubles' were identified.

### 7.3.3 Using Sarangi (2000) Example 1 for critical review

Taking the 19-turn sequence from the interview with Yv from around the 51st minute onwards starting with the question where the researcher introduces the topic of productivity, and finishing shortly after the point at which the researcher perceived Yv as beginning to be able to relate to the original question asked, the researcher has matched this up turn-by-turn with the Sarangi example (2000: 8) starting from the point where the examiner first asks the candidate about personality, which is the first turn given by Sarangi.

The purpose of this is to identify elements of talk structure, such as pauses, that can be seen to occupy similar positions in both sequences, and which may be characteristic of interactional trouble. A table showing the structure of the turn-by-turn comparison is given in Appendix 3, with longer turns abridged. Full talk from the interview with Yv is available in Excerpt 4 below (section 8.1), and for the medical oral exam in the original source (Sarangi 2000).

Turns beginning 'D' refer to the interview with Yv, and those beginning with 'S' refer to the excerpt from Sarangi Example 1.

To facilitate the comparison of structure, the researcher has placed against turn S04 of the candidate, a long turn shown as happening without any utterance by the examiner, both turns D04 and D06. The intervening turn D05 is a 'yeah' by the researcher which fitted so closely into the flow of Yv's talk at this point that in the original transcript it had not been noticed and had been omitted. The researcher has also run together a turn consisting of Yv coughing with the two surrounding turns of the researcher (turns D07, D08 and D09) and matched these against a single turn from Sarangi (turn S05).

So using an example of an interview situation in which interactional troubles have been explicitly identified (Sarangi 2000: 9), the researcher wants to identify elements in the flow and structure of talk that are similar to the interview with Yv.

This is in order to identify the most likely elements that might be used to characterise interactional troubles, and which can then be used to investigate whether these are in fact common features within all three examples considered; and whether in addition they can in fact be considered elements characterisable as representing interactional trouble.

The Rapley (2001) excerpts could also be used as an initial comparator, but in this case the initial analysis would be much more complex because of the work the interviewer does in presenting himself as seeming non-directive, while in fact being directive.

In terms of overall structure, bearing in mind that some turns are abridged, both excerpts are of approximately the same length, both in turn count and words spoken.

Each excerpt opens with the new topic-initiating question (turns D01 and S01). The question from Sarangi is relatively simple, but that from the interview with Yv is complex and also includes a quite long pause near the end - these points will be considered in depth in the full conversation analysis below (Chapter 8).

The next turns (D02 and S02) are characterised by beginning with a non-verbal utterance (‘.pt’ - a slight lipsmack, and a sigh) and include one or more long pauses, followed by a first restatement of the opening question with more specificity (D03/S03).

At this point, the answerers both produce an answer (D04/D06 and S04), which share some similar characteristics. The turn starts with some release of tension (‘(.) <again> its:h’ in D04 with the ‘h’ indicating an out-breath and shortly after the table on which the microphone sat was knocked by the researcher; ‘ok personality affects [laughs]’ in S04), and then in each case the answerers go on to give lists separated by some pauses.

There are some differences between these turns. The turn S04 is longer than Yv’s and with fewer pauses, and there was a ‘yeah’ given by the researcher during the course of D04/D06. The length of D06 may have been affected by the fact that the researcher cuts across Yv’s answer with ‘[ right’ (turn D07). Thus Yv is demonstrating somewhat more interactional



difficulty than the candidate, and the researcher is being somewhat more active than the examiner at this point.

The next turns D07/D09 and S05 both try to relate the answers given to the questioner's intention in asking the original question, thus trying to add some further clarity ('do you describe those as productivity?' in turn D07/D09, 'what about your own er personality' in S05) but with some stumbling, for example 'the: the' in D07/D09 and 'for for' in S05.

Each turn is also structured as 'phrase referencing previous answer' followed by a closed question beginning "do you" referencing the foregoing phrase deictically. These then are examples of the use of deictics within 'tying structures' for linking current with previous talk (Sidnell 2010: 226). The researcher's opening phrase references Yv's previous answer directly ('[ right so that so those (.2) so the, ((Yv coughs)) retention the: the success:']) while the examiner references the candidate's answer by contrast ('what about your own er personality').

In these opening phrases, 'so that so' and 'what about' have the same rhythm - du du du, staccato, rat-tat-tat - followed by the reference to the content of the answerer's turn, and then the closed question. So there is a bit of a build up to get the attention of the answerer, the reference to their talk, and then the closed question drawing the focus towards the questioner's concerns.

The researcher's closed question was 'do you describe those as productivity', and the examiner's was 'do you think that's ideally suited for for general practice'. The deictic (distancing) reference to the answerer's talk using 'that' and 'those', rather than using for example this and these or the actual words used by the answerer, serves to emphasise the questioners own concerns, 'productivity' and 'suited for general practice', as being *here and to be addressed*.

The way these questions are contextualised and the form in which the questions are asked, in both cases, seem quite exact and insistent on drawing the topical focus away from the answerer's displayed thoughts towards the questioner's concerns.

At this point the two sequences diverge. There is still some repetition of the question in some related form in both passages (e.g. 'productivity' in turns D15 and D19, and 'personality' in turns S09 and S15). Turns D19 and S15 represent the final turns in the matched-up excerpts. The final interesting point is that in each case between these two related questions, there occurs a degree of overlap or cutting across, evident in turns D16 to D18 in the interview with Yv, and turns S10 to S15 in the oral exam.

This analysis has therefore shown up a number of possible common elements that may be indicative of interactional trouble. These are pauses, repetition, overlap, non-verbalisations and laughter or release of tension.

In the researcher's view, it is difficult to think that non-verbalisations and laughter or release of tension are very reliable indicators of interactional trouble, and therefore in the next section he has concentrated on ascertaining whether the other three structural elements of talk - pauses, repetition and overlap - can be found in all three of the comparator excerpts, which are the interview with Yv, Example 1 from Sarangi (2000) and Extracts 2, 3 and 1b from Rapley (2001). The section also establishes, based on the literature, how these three characteristics can also be considered evidence of trouble within conversations.

#### 7.3.4 Common characteristics

Drawing on the analysis in the previous subsection and now comparing *both* published examples with the post-51st minute passage from the interview with Yv, a number of similar characteristics that break the normal rules of conversation can be seen.

These are that there are frequent breaks in the natural pacing of conversation, that there are overlapping or cutting across of one participant's talk by the other participant, and thirdly that there is repetition of or insistence on, in some way, the interviewer's desire as to what direction the conversation should be taking.

Firstly, all three passages show frequent pausing, including long pauses. In reference to pauses in the ' "pacing" ' of talk, Sacks comments that 'as a methodological rule, I take it that any time you have to screw around with the pacing of talk in order to bring something off, you're in trouble' (Sacks 1992a: 772).

Secondly, there are overlaps, two people talking at once, or talking and using continuers at once. In the interview with Yv, this occurs in turns 06/07 (Excerpt 4 below), turns 16/17/18, turns 21/22, turns 23/34 and turns 31/32. In the case of the Sarangi excerpt, this occurs in turns S10/S11 (see Appendix 3) and turns S14/15. This cutting across another's talk goes against a 'basic feature' of conversation that only 'one party speaks at a time' (Schegloff and Sacks 1973: 293 in ten Have 2007: 19); and 'interruptions, simultaneous starts' are characterised as 'organizational problems' by ten Have (2007: 199), though not all overlapping talk signifies trouble (Sidnell 2010: 53).

In Rapley, the cutting across is evident when the interviewer uses the continuer ' °mm.° ', in lines 19/20 in Extract 3 and lines 10/11 in Extract 1b. In the first case the respondent cuts across the interviewer, and in the second the interviewer cuts across the respondent. Sacks (1992b: 9) describes such continuers (in his case 'mm hm' ) as being placed at pause-points, to show that the listener is listening.

In respect of another continuer, 'uh huh', Sacks says that 'it's very hard to misplace "uh huh," to delay it or shoot it out ahead of a clause completion,

etc.’ (1992a: 746), but this does seem to be what happens in the Rapley example, and so this therefore may be an interviewer technique, a subtle ‘insister’ rather than a simple ‘continuer’. One such use of this ‘ °mm.° ’ continuer (Extract 3 line 19) is perhaps similarly discussed by Rapley as not resulting in a ‘ “*natural*” continuation-of the prior talk’ but as actively promoting a topic-shift by the respondent (2001: 314).

Another point of comparison with the Sarangi excerpt is the frequent return to and restatement of the original question. This occurs in the interview with Yv in turns 03, 09, 11, 15 and 19 in Excerpt 4 below, and in the Sarangi excerpt in turns S03, S05, S09 and S15 (see Appendix 3).

### 7.3.5 How ‘insistence’ is enacted in Rapley (2001)

There is no exact analogue of this insistence on the original question in the Rapley excerpts. However, if the interpretation of the ‘ °mm.° ’ continuer as an ‘insister’ is correct, then the quieter talk (marked by the ° . . . ° annotation) may play an equivalent role. There are also two occasions when the interviewer uses very quiet talk, marked by doubled °’s, during the original question (lines 6 and 7 in Extract 2), and lines 1 and 2 in Extract 1b, which is the final talk articulated by the interviewer before the confidence of having used drugs by the respondent is given (line 8 of Extract 1b).

Intervening between this double-quiet interviewer talk and the confidence are three extended pauses that Rapley attributes to work done by the interviewer to elicit more talk (2001: 314). The paraphernalia of double-quiet talk, pauses and the ‘misplaced’ continuer ‘ °mm.° ’ may then play a similar role of insistence in the Rapley excerpts as the repetition and restatement of the question do in the Sarangi excerpt and the interview with Yv.

Rapley handles this question of possible insistence in the following way. He describes the interviewer as ‘control[ing] the trajectory of the talk’ (2001:

316), a trajectory that arrives at, in these excerpts, a confidence to drugs taking being given by the respondent. This trajectory starts with a topic-initiating question that 'direct[s]' the respondent towards 'personal thoughts' (2001: 311). Directions at various points in the excerpts are 'promoted' through the use of silences and the continuer ' °mm.° ' (2001: 312, 314).

Indeed Rapley notes (2001: 314) that what the researcher here has termed a misplaced continuer can be regarded in fact, following Gardner (1997), as a topic-shifter. One place that it is used is when, just after confiding that he had taken drugs, the respondent shifts back to a more general, rather than personal, statement (Rapley 2001: 305 Excerpt 1b line 11). The interviewer uses it to cut across the respondent's talk, and follows up soon after with a question about the respondent's personal use, thus returning the direction of the track back to the personal and away from the group.

Rapley's comments concerning the talk in the environs of the double-quiet usages of the interviewer are also interesting. In the one case, when the topic of the cards is opened, Rapley's view (2001: 312) is that the interviewer is at this stage working not to use the term 'drugs' explicitly.

The use of the term 'cards' can then be seen, from this perspective, as a possible *code* standing for 'drugs', as the card exercise was concerned with the characteristics and effects of different drugs. The opening question involving the use of the term 'cards' is seen by Rapley to open up, through the reply, the possible sub-question 'Has he used drugs?' (2001: 312).

Similarly, the second use of double-quiet talk by the interviewer is used in a passage when another possible code is in use. Rapley notes that the terms 'softer drugs' and 'harder drugs' may be used to signify 'drugs I take' and 'drugs I don't take' (2001: 318). The talk ' °>so when you say the s:offer drugs° °°what does that mean.<°° ' (Rapley 2001: 313 Extract 3 lines 31-32)

is then interpretable as a request for this code to be decoded. The double-quiet talk may thus be a way of conveying the understanding that the code is now ready to be unpacked.

Indeed, the first use of the topic-shifter ‘ °mm.° ’ is used by the interviewer shortly after the respondent starts to discuss ‘harder drugs’ (Rapley 2001: 313 Extract 3 line 19). After this use of the topic-shifter, the interviewer then says nothing until after the respondent starts to talk about the ‘softer drugs’, shortly after which the interviewer then gives the talk ‘ °>so when you say the s:offer drugs° °°what does that mean.<°° ’.

This line of interpretation would then indicate that the topic-shifter was used to move talk away from coded ‘drugs I don’t take’ to ‘drugs I do take’, and when this had happened, the interviewer then asked the respondent to drop the code and talk straight.

Thereafter, the interviewer again says nothing, though leaving several silences unfilled, until after the respondent has offered his confidence. And at this point the interviewer again wields the topic-shifter (as discussed above) to keep the respondent on the personal track, enabling the interviewer to eventually ask the direct personal question ‘and how often were you °using (it). ° ’, without it seeming out of place.

If the use of double-quiet talk is indeed used as an invitation to move away from coded talk towards confidence-giving, then the *quietness* of the talk may have some significance. Sacks (1992b: 413) remarks on the usefulness of using ‘What?’ to ask for a question to be repeated as though it was not heard, when in fact the reason was something other, for example it was not understood.

By using double-quiet talk in an invitation to give a confidence, this opens up the opportunity for the person of whom the confidence is being asked to indeed more believably say ‘what?’ as though they didn’t hear, and so turn

down the invitation without the asker having to be seen to have their invitation to confidence declined, with the attendant embarrassment.

Such a hook that can be easily declined without having to give notice of its existence, by in this case giving any relevant answer, is similar to the situation to which Sidnell draws attention when Betty, wanting to ask Sue to go out with her on Halloween, latches on an unarticulated obstacle ( 'but like') followed by a possible transition-relevance place in the talk 'I wanna go trick or treating with you=but like (.) yeah' (2010: 17).

Sidnell's interpretation of this is that if Sue then doesn't want to or can't go, she can pick up on *Betty's* as yet unelucidated obstacle, and in this way no embarrassment of turning down an offer will be suffered on either side, as then no actual offer would have been made - it would have been nullified by the now elucidated obstacle. So if she does want to go, all she needs to do is *not* take this specific tack, and say almost anything else.

In this way, it is possible to see how Rapley's interpretation can in turn lead to a perspective where, as Rapley explicitly states, the interviewer does indeed control the trajectory of talk, and amongst the key tools used are the silences, the double-quiet talk and the misplaced continuers or topic-shifters as means of 'insisting' on the desired trajectory from coded talk towards confidence.

### 7.3.6 Insistence considered as 'interactional trouble'

That such repetition and insistence can be considered 'interactional trouble' can be seen in the following way.

Sacks (1992b: 413) discusses the sensibilities of repeating questions without affronting the intelligence of the listener. The repeated repetitions of questions evident in the interview with Yv and in the excerpt from Sarangi seem to contravene such rules of politeness, and so can be construed as

what in an ordinary conversation would constitute interactional trouble. Similarly, the long pauses ascribed by Rapley to the interviewer in the excerpts he discusses could well, in ordinary conversation, be interpreted as rudeness.

While it is true that the commonly pertaining situation in an interview of one participant asking question after question may also eventually in ordinary conversation create problems (see for example Rapley 2001: 311), so that the normal course of an interview would constitute circumstantial evidence suggesting imminent interactional trouble in ordinary conversation, the researcher considers that the question repetition and silences discussed here are sufficiently beyond the normal bounds of even an interview situation that they can be taken as indicative of interactional troubles.

Ten Have for example describes 'a typical order of repairing an understanding problem' (in the context of structured research interviews) as a question repeat followed by a paraphrase (2007: 186), and the number of repeats and paraphrases found here is beyond that.

#### 7.3.7 Summary of how 'interactional troubles' were identified

There are thus a number of indications that the part of the interview with Yv that concerned productivity, from 51 minutes into the interview onwards, can be characterised as one containing interactional trouble.

The first indication was that Yv herself remarked on this passage after the interview was concluded. The second was that while in the first 51 minutes Yv's turns were longer on average than the researcher's, after this point the average length of the researcher's turns exceeded Yv's.

The final indication found was that in comparing the passage to two published examples of interactional troubles, Rapley (2001) and Sarangi



(2000), three points of correspondence were found, affecting the pace, flow and direction of the conversation.

These three points of correspondence were frequent pauses, overlaps or cuttings across, and insistence. Insistence was evident in the interview with Yv and in Sarangi in the form of the repeated repetition of the original question in various forms, which Sidnell terms 'pursuit' of a missing answer (2010: 64-65); in the excerpts in Rapley (2001) it is less clear, but perhaps is evident in a subtler form in the use, particularly, of repeated double-quiet talk, silences and topic-shifters.

In order to understand why these interactional troubles occurred, and what then the passage on productivity may be taken to signify, the next chapter presents a detailed conversation analysis of the passage, looking at how shared meaning around the topic of productivity was co-constructed by Yv and the researcher within the interview situation.

## *Chapter 8*

# Conversation analysis of the interactional troubles

### 8.1 INTRODUCTION AND EXCERPT 4

Having securely identified the presence of significant interactional troubles in the previous chapter, this chapter now presents a detailed conversation analysis of the passage in the interview with Yv that concerned the topic of 'productivity' where these troubles occurred. The full passage including the sequences of interactional troubles is shown in this section in Excerpt 4. The annotation conventions used are listed in Appendix 2.

The analysis is split into five main sections considering how the interactional troubles began, what topic-initiating question was asked, the literalness of the question, how a shared understanding of the meaning of the question was co-constructed, and the premature opening of a new topic together with the ensuing repair processes and insertion sequences. There are then three further sections looking at topical content, interpreting the topical content, and the consideration of possible alternative analytic trajectories based on Rapley and Antaki (1998) and Roulston (2001). A number of general points may be made, though, before proceeding to the detailed conversation analysis of 'what is going on here' that starts in the next section, 8.2.

The aim here is to assess, using the resource of conversational analysis theoretic objects, which elements in this passage can be considered routine, which can be considered routine (accounted-for) interactional trouble, and which elements cannot be analysed or accounted for in either of these ways. It is these latter that the researcher hopes will encapsulate (from the ethnographic perspective) the essence of the strangeness or

unsettled nature of the experience, and which would in turn provide a key to how the interview contributed to the development of the researcher's subjectivity towards 'productivity'.

The passage starts around 51:10 minutes into the interview with Yv, and lasts until 55:06 minutes, the end of the recorded interview, a length of about four minutes. This period covers 40 turns. The transcript shown in Excerpt 4 was prepared by listening repeatedly to the digitally recorded interview in short bursts of a few or tens of seconds; and then returning to the digital recording during the extended analysis to re-experience key passages during which additional features were sometimes noticed.

The question on productivity that 'initiates' the interactional troubles is shown in turn 01. But in fact the troubles start in the previous two turns, indicated by the two second pause shown at the beginning of Yv's turn 00, and the one second pause, lipsmack and inbreath ( (1) .pt .h ) in the researchers preceding turn -01.

Excerpt 4 from interview with Yv from 51 minutes onwards: discussion on productivity with conversation analysis annotation added

Turn Spkr Talk sequence including interactional troubles

- 01 R: °alright° (1) .pt .h so I feel that (.) you could talk all evening  
00 Y: (2) I love my job ((both laugh))  
01 R: umm (.) so I've got - I'll kind of (.) move on (.) cause I've got a couple of other (.) questions which aren't (.) um may not necessarily be so fruitful - so (.4) ↑when you're thinking about (.) the how training and education can contribute to (.) to the organisation's effectiveness - ↑d'you ever (.) use the idea of productivity? (1.5) you can say no if you want to  
02 Y: .pt <productivity> (2) umm:: it's  
03 R: do you ever have discussions in the organization about (.) productivity?

- 04 Y: (.) <again> its:h in terms of training (.6) ((microphone on table knocked)) yes and no - productivity (.) for us hh the product is (.5) assessment (.6) um: retention
- 05 R: yeah
- 06 Y: exit (.8) what we do in between that is outcomes - getting someone (.5) um into a hhouse, (.) moving into a house um: (.) getting someone's benefit sorted out (.5) um: (.8) so (.) we've got loads and loads of different outcomes that we can [ re
- 07 R: [ right so that so those (.2) so the,
- 08 Y: ((coughs))
- 09 R: retention the: the success: (1.0) do you describe those as productivity?
- 10 Y: hm:
- 11 R: when you're talking about them in the organization (.) with your (.) members of staff (.1) do you ever use the word productivity?
- 12 Y: no
- 13 R: no ok so you're just saying – well (.) I've said productivity - that's the closest to,
- 14 Y: <yeah>
- 15 R: ok ↑that's fine ↑that's fine .hhh umm (.5) so they they are they're they're kindof measures (.5) they're like productivity but you don't actually (.) call them productivity?
- 16 Y: no [ no
- 17 R: [ ↑that's: that's fine n[ow
- 18 Y: [because we're not selling and buying
- 19 R: yeah yeah yeah yeeah - so (.) so you personally - now not what your - but you personally (.7) the concept of productivity (.5) do you find - how do you react personally to that? (.) do you find that useful (.) kind of idea (.) in your (.) work? (.) or not - do you think it totally antagonistic to y'? completely wrong? or,
- 20 Y: yeah - because it's another ((rustle)) (.8) box:
- 21 R: so it's not a relevant - so would you think – you think it's (.2) worse than (.1) not being relevant - it's (.8) or: (.8) just (1.0) don't care about it? (1.0) if I said to you - you've got to become more productive (.2) what would you (.2) would you think that would help you be [ more effective?
- 22 Y: [ yeauh – ↑performance (.3) but not (.) productivity .pt (.4)
- 23 R: yeah (.) I'm just talking about the word [ productivity
- 24 Y: [ productivity (1.2)
- 25 R: n' - its - it ssounds like no heh heh definite no=
- 26 Y: =°n↓o°=

- 27 R: =not - it's got the wrong - how did you describe it - it's not  
about products and (.2)
- 28 Y: it's about performance
- 29 R: right
- 30 Y: .h (.2) for me product is having: (.2) materials
- 31 R: yeah
- 32 Y: and producing (.8) umm an item at the end
- 33 R: right - and that's not what you [ do
- 34 Y: [ that's not what we do
- 35 R: yeah - because you're (.2) about people?
- 36 Y: we're about people (.6) and people are not items
- 37 R: (.5) .hh OK (.5) brilliant - thanks very much
- 38 Y: thank you
- 39 R: you've survived
- 40 Y: he he he ((digital recorder turned off))

Key: Spkr = speaker, R = researcher, Y = Yv, the participant. For description of conversation analysis annotations, please see Appendix 2

## 8.2 HOW DO THE INTERACTIONAL TROUBLES BEGIN?

Turning now to the detailed conversation analysis, we may ask what initiates the interactional troubles? In terms of understanding how shared meaning is constructed during this passage, this is an absolutely crucial question.

Taking turns -01, 00 and 01 together, these three turns are dominated by the researcher. The unambiguous contribution of Yv during these turns is the statement 'I love my job' in turn 00.

During these turns, the researcher's talk is interspersed with short pauses, 'um's and longer pauses. What then was going on in the researcher's mind at this point?

The researcher had by this time covered all the planned topics, and the word 'productivity' had not occurred in the conversation. From the point of view of the research programme, the researcher's plan was then at this

point to ask the respondent directly about the usefulness of productivity in the context of the contribution that training and education make to the organisation's effectiveness.

The respondent then had at this point to do four things. Firstly, ascertain that all other topics had been covered; secondly, focus on the need to ask the research question; thirdly, bring the research question intellectually into his mind; and fourthly formulate a way of asking this question of this respondent.

The softened '°alright°' followed by a one second pause, lipsmack and inbreath at the beginning of turn -01 indicates consideration, judgement and the announcement of coming talk to Yv, and at this time the researcher was reflecting as to whether he had covered all topics. The next piece of talk 'so I feel that (.) you could talk all evening' is an external indication of the external thought processes of thinking:

yes I have covered all my planned topics, and the explicit research subject of "productivity" has not emerged, and even if I introduced other topics, it seems likely to me, as my other investigations have suggested was quite possible indeed likely, that "productivity" would not emerge as a respondent-originated topic, so now I need to focus on what I need to do, what I planned to do in this eventuality, to take my research project forward, namely ask directly about "productivity"

This piece of talk was used by the researcher to firstly acknowledge that Yv's talk, given the topics covered, had been entirely satisfactory from the researcher's perspective, but yet (secondly) there was something wanting - that is the comment had a slight edge to it - and thirdly as something to say at this point to buy some more thinking time.

There then follows a two second pause at the beginning of turn 00, attributed to Yv, but this attribution is ambiguous. The researcher was then at this point bringing to his mind the form of the question that he needed to

ask, that is the explicit research question. Yv, though, could not know this, and so responds to the previous statement slightly defensively, naturally, by saying 'I love my job', as a way of justifying having had plenty to say (even if now apparently not completely satisfactory), and the joint tension in this situation is acknowledged and to a degree eased by the joint laughter.

By this time, the researcher is feeling that the 'sticking point' has been reached, and so must begin his question before the situation deteriorates or embarrassment increases. But it is not yet formulated. So the talk at the beginning of turn 01 provides himself the frame in which to formulate the question. That is, this section of talk allows him to put forward a very local context in which the question can be taken to be understood, as well as giving himself some more time for formulating.

What then does this very local context comprise? The first point that the researcher makes is that he needs to introduce a new topic, one not naturally based on previous talk, by using a misplacement marker (to 'move on' to other questions) (Sidnell 2010: 3), a topic stemming from the 'extra-local research agenda' (Rapley 2001: 310).

The second point is that these questions may not be 'so fruitful'. 'Fruitful' helps lower the tension by acknowledging that the previous talk had been fruitful, but also the researcher is here trying to lower the expectations that Yv might perceive the researcher to have of her replies to the new questions.

Why does the researcher here start 'so I've got' but then changes this to the more complex talk of 'I'll kind of (.) move on (.) cause I've got'? Initially, thinking back, the researcher was going to say, simply, that he'd got some other questions to ask, but as he started he thought this was rather disingenuous and that he should go some way to explain the 'otherness' of these questions, and give Yv fair warning.

The 'otherness' referred to is that there was in the researcher's mind, and unknowable to Yv, the extensive reading and analytic research that the researcher had undertaken that suggested strongly to the researcher that the concept of 'productivity', about which he was about to ask, might be highly problematic within the work context in which Yv was employed, and yet at the same time 'productivity' was seen as something that, in a general sense, was all good.

This kind of talk is described by Rapley and Antaki (1998: 600) as 'discreet talk' which 'both asserts a position and withdraws from it', and is characteristic of the 'tensions between the rhetorical and practical agendas of the interaction' that occur in research interviews, which 'force attempts at the naturalization of the encounter'. Such 'discreet talk' can be used to at the same time both convey and distract from a 'knowledge differential' which favours the interviewer as the more knowledgeable participant (1998: 598-599). In Rapley and Antaki's argument, because it subtly refers to such a knowledge differential, discreet talk can therefore be deployable as a technique by the interviewer within research interviews to gain some end.

In the specific context under investigation, though, there was a particular aspect of the pertaining 'knowledge differential' that was relevant. This was the researcher's consideration of the *possible* contrast between the *possibly* highly problematic nature of the technical concept of productivity in Yv's work context and the general conception of 'productivity' as something good. So that in fact what the researcher might appear to be doing, under this scenario, was setting a trap - asking a question to which there was, more than no right answer, only self-incriminating answers.

In all fairness, this trap needed to be defused *before* set, if possible, and the discreet talk goes some way towards doing this. This discreet talk can therefore be accounted for in this way, though some more tendentious



motive along the lines of Rapley and Antaki's (1998) argument cannot thereby be completely ruled out.

It is possible that the particular word selection reveals a further less conscious subtext. Given the twin definitions of productivity (see section 4.5), one as a general term for fruitfulness in any particular situation, and the second one as a technical measure, the researcher may have been trying to signal by using the phrase 'may not necessarily be so fruitful' that it was not the first general meaning of productivity that he was concerned with, the one that points to the characteristics of fruitfulness that are relevant to a particular situation, whatever they may be, but something containing some more specific, probably measurable meaning.

Then, wrapping up this very local context with 'so' and a medium pause and then initial emphasis to mark the end of the preface and the start of the question ( ' ↑when ' ), the researcher asks his question with relatively little pausing or umming, a question that is in fact quite complex.

The question does not produce an immediate response, and so after one and a half seconds, the researcher adds a qualifying piece of talk, 'you can say no if you want to' (end of turn 01). What is the purpose of this particular piece of talk? And how did this piece of talk change the question that was being asked?

The interactional troubles now being well under way, the researcher takes up this challenge, and turns to considering explicitly, what question was asked?

### 8.3 WHAT QUESTION WAS ASKED?

Questions are interesting. Levinson introduces his discussion of conversational implicature with the following exchange:

A: Can you tell me the time?

B: Well, the milkman has come

(Levinson 1983: 97)

Literally, the question 'can you tell me the time?' is asking for a yes or no answer. But questions are generally asked on the basis that the meaning of the question will be interpreted by the respondent. If questions are answered *literally*, this often causes problems. Sacks gives a good example of this (1992a: 56), and remarks that answers tend to be 'constructed by reference to the project of the question', so that the respondent attempts to understand what the questioner wants to find out (1992a: 56).

How then is the project of the question 'd'you ever (.) use the idea of productivity?' likely to be understood by Yv?

It seemed likely to the researcher that 'd'you ever (.) use the idea of productivity' would be *interpreted* as 'what is your idea of productivity', much as 'can you tell me the time?' is interpreted as 'what is the time?'. That is, the project of the question would be interpreted as being about its meaning, not (as the researcher wanted) about its use.

In this case, though, the researcher wanted an answer to the *literal* question that was asked. In addition, there was a risk that the question could be interpreted by Yv as having a bias towards a 'preference for agreement' (ten Have 2007: 5 referencing Sacks 1987) in the form of a yes answer. In comparison, a no-biased form of the question might be '[I take it] you don't use the idea of productivity' without rising intonation.

Because, why would the researcher take the trouble of asking this question, if he did not want further talk (and this is generally taken to be the role of the respondent in a research interview, to generate extended talk) around

productivity, which carries with it the latent assumption of familiarity with the word 'productivity' because how can someone be reasonably *expected* to be able to talk about something *accountably* if they are not familiar with it? And as has been discussed (at least from the point of view of the respondent - see the discussion on the social research frame in the previous chapter), a research interview *is* generally an accountable situation.

Therefore, after a pause of sufficient duration which the researcher reckoned was long enough to have allowed for an answer if Yv had been a habitual user of the word 'productivity', he introduced the talk of 'you can say no if you want to' to indicate that the question should be interpreted literally, nor was it designed to be yes-biased.

This latter purpose is after the fashion described by Sidnell in his introduction of how after an assessment, a non-response can be interpreted as disagreement, and then the utterer may switch the sense of their original utterance to allow the co-participant in the talk to take up a position of agreement rather than disagreement (2010: 2-4). That is, it is reasonable for the utterer to consider a delay in response as putative evidence indicating disagreement. The modification of talk in turn by the utterer then represents an attempt at self-repair, in regard to the consideration of the preference for agreement in talk.

#### 8.4 LITERALNESS

However, the intended self-repair can also be considered in this case as having the effect of switching the *preference of the question*. Sacks (1992b: 414) talks about 'questioner-preferred answers'. If the answer is the preferred answer, then the questioner will proceed to develop his preferred direction of conversation. For this eventuality, the answerer can simply give the short preferred answer, and the questioner will naturally develop the conversation from there. If the answer is *not* the answer for

which the preference has been indicated, then the answerer is free to expand his/her answer. Sacks refers to this (in the case that 'yes' is the preferred answer) as ' "yes"-period and "no"-plus '.

An important observation by Sacks is that what the answerer knows is that if s/he gives the preferred answer, then the questioner will take her/his pre-planned direction, but what this direction is is unknown to the answerer.

In this case, the question can be taken as starting off as a ' "yes"-period and "no"-plus' question, in which if Yv simply answers 'yes', then the researcher can follow a natural line of questioning on the topic of productivity that has now been opened up. But by adding the qualifier 'you can say no if you want to' after the second and a half pause, this switches the question around to a ' "no"-period and "yes"-plus' question.

Thus, while the researcher added the qualifying statement 'you can say no if you want to' in order to make clear that the question should be taken literally and allow agreement if the answer is no, the way that this qualifier may have been interpreted by Yv could have been quite different.

If Yv had interpreted the original question as one with a 'questioner-preferred answer' along the lines of the scenario described by Sacks, and if the qualifier was interpreted by Yv as a means of simply switching the researcher's answer-preference (so that as it were he had all bases covered), then this would present her with a situation in which if she said a simple 'yes' or a simple 'no', either case could now open up a pre-planned direction to the conversation known to the researcher and unknown to Yv.

If for any reason at this point Yv was unwilling to proceed before reaching a *shared* understanding of the 'project of the question', then this would inhibit Yv answering either "yes"-period or "no"-period. Thus the qualifying talk, which was intended to encourage Yv to take the question literally, could

under this interpretation have had the opposite effect, of making a simple yes or no answer /ess likely.

Perhaps in hindsight the researcher would have been better off saying something more forthright like 'This is not a trick question, I really am interested in whether or not you use the actual word "productivity" ', rather than the more elliptical 'you can say no if you want to', to achieve his aim of conveying that Yv could answer the question literally.

In summary, then, after a period of interactional troubles during which the researcher was reflecting on the interview up to that point and formulating how to introduce the key element of his extra-local research agenda, he asks a grammatically complex question framed within a very local context in which he attempts to defuse in advance a potential situational trap caused by the dual meanings of productivity; and then compounds the complexity through asking the question in a way that could be interpreted as being initially in a "yes"-period/"no"-plus questioner-preferred answer form and then adding qualifying talk to change it to a "no"-period/"yes"-plus form.

How then does Yv cope with this level of conversational complexity? How does she go about contributing to developing a shared understanding of the question that has been asked?

## 8.5 CO-CONSTRUCTING A SHARED UNDERSTANDING

At this point, Yv's response is ' .pt <productivity> (2) umm:: it's ' (turn 02). This is a lipsmack, perhaps to indicate perusal or consideration, and then a drawn-out repetition of an important word from the question, productivity. Yv is thinking and wants to show she is thinking. There follows a long pause (two seconds) and then Yv gives an extended, almost exaggerated 'um' indicating further thought.

What is this show of consideration for? What is the work that Yv is doing at this point? Firstly, this buys more thinking time; but secondly, in contrast to just one long pause, the slowed and elongated annunciations fill the conversational space, thus making it more difficult for the researcher to add more talk (as he had done at the end of turn 01).

The researcher, to whom through long familiarity the literalness of the question is unproblematic, responds to this show of deliberation by restating the question in a simpler, more specific form, as though the grammatical complexity was Yv's main concern. The researcher has thus interpreted these interactional troubles as indicating a problem of understanding.

But again, Yv's interpretation of this question may not be straight-forward. This question, again intended to be taken literally, *looks* like an example of the common conversational gambit of the 'correction-invitation device', offering one member of a class (in this case, discussions in the organisation where productivity might be used) in order to elicit from the co-participant an alternative member of the class (Sacks 1992a: 22).

But the unstated assumption of this form of usage is the class, in this case 'where productivity is talked about'; and in using this form, the researcher may inadvertently have been seen by Yv as requiring from her an *account* of in what circumstances she talks about productivity (Sacks 1992a: 23).

So assuming that Yv is at this point still aiming to understand the project of the question and develop an appropriate response strategy, this simplified form of the question does not reduce but adds to the confusion, in effect contradicting the effect of the previously added qualifier of 'you can say no if you want to'.

Yv's response at this point (turn 04) is extremely interesting. The first part consists of ' (.) <again> its:h in terms of training '. So initially, Yv employs the same stratagems as in her previous turn of elongation and extension to

fill the conversational space. This short sequence is built around the word 'again'. But in this case, the short sequence finishes with an outbreath ( 'h' ) after ' it's: '. This is like she is reflecting on the two questions and thinking :

You've asked me the same question, again. This isn't helping. But wait, the two versions of the question aren't quite the same.

And then the first difference she picks up on is that the second form of the question does not refer to training.

There then follows a shortish pause, and if Yv is still comparing the two questions, then she may have noticed at this point that in the first question the researcher asks 'd'you ever (.) use the idea of productivity' and in the second 'do you ever have discussions . . . about (.) productivity'.

If this is the case, then this difference, between using the idea of productivity and discussions about productivity, may underlie the form of answer Yv gives at this point. Under this scenario, Yv is able to answer no to one form of the question, yes to the other, and interpret the phrase 'about productivity' as 'concerning productivity'. The nature of her answer, in terms of coming to a shared understanding of the meaning of the question, is then itself a correction-invitation device, saying in effect 'this is an answer illustrating what I understand the project of your question to be - if this is not right, then provide me with an alternative'.

The form of the answer, which is "yes and no"-plus, also neatly avoids both a "yes"-period *and* a "no"-period answer, either of which could open up a pre-planned direction unknown to Yv, and also avoids the alternatives of a "no"-plus and a "yes"-plus answer, either of which could have caused friction with the presumed pre-planned preferred direction of the alternative form of the question. The answer "yes and no"-period would have also been possible, but provocative in its shortness and opaqueness.

Thus, the form of Yv's answer both avoids offering an invitation to the researcher to follow an unknown-to-Yv direction, and also avoids Yv proffering her own interpretation of the direction which might be in direct conflict with a pre-planned direction of the researcher's.

Yv then provides in the second half of turn 04 and in turn 06 a number of measures that they use in the course of their work, such as retention and outcomes, as an account of what 'productivity' or 'the product' is. The intervening turn 05 is a continuer ( 'yeah' ) indicating attention-paying by the researcher and possibly also an indication that in his view the question has not yet been answered (see Sacks 1992a: 9-11 on continuers and when stories are over).

This correction-invitation device used by Yv in turns 04 and 06 seems to take the form of a series of 'candidate understandings' (ten Have 2007: 134) separated by a series of possible transition-relevance places (ten Have 2007: 128, Sidnell 2010: 42). The device is repeatedly extended by appending additional turn-constructural units, some sentences, some phrases, made of further candidate understandings followed by further possible transition-relevance places in the form of short or medium-length pauses.

For example, in turn 06, in terms of outcomes Yv says 'getting someone (.5) um into a hhouse,' followed by a short pause '(.)' then 'moving into a house' , then 'um: (.) ' , followed by 'getting someone's benefit sorted out', followed by '(.5) um: (0.8) ' , followed by 'so (.) we've got loads and loads of different outcomes that we can [ re'.

The researcher uses the phrase 'possible transition-relevance places' because they look like what would be transition-relevance places in ordinary conversation. But on re-listening to the recording, Yv's answer over turns 04 and 06 shows a certain pace and momentum, and this pacing



suggests the pause points were not designed to be unambiguous transition-relevance places. In addition, Yv finishes turn 06 with a summarising sentence which in contrast *unambiguously* marks an imminent transition-relevance place ( 'so (.) we've got loads and loads of different outcomes that we can [ re ' ).

In ordinary conversation, the pauses provided by Yv in turns 04 and 06 might be much more risky, with Sidnell commenting that:

*speakers* who produce multi-unit turns display an orientation to the relevance of speaker transition at possible unit completion by increasing the pace of the talk through such places . . . (Sidnell 2010: 42).

There is though no indication of any such speeding up in turns 04 and 06, and this may be because it is unnecessary in this situation as the expectation in interviews is that answerers will often provide extended answers. Ten Have considers that the use of multi-turn-constructive units in a single turn may be more likely in institutional settings where there is some pre-allocation of turns (for example the questioner-answerer formalism of an interview) than in ordinary conversation, though the examples he quotes are of *questioners* rather than answerers making use of them (ten Have 2007: 177 & 183).

These possible transition-relevance places then may have a different primary purpose, though they are places where the questioner *could* say something. Looking at the pause sequence in turn 06 in the talk concerning outcomes, the first is ' (.5) um ', but this occurs just after 'getting someone' with the clear expectation of more talk to come, and so does not look like a likely transition-relevance place; this is more an example where the speaker has 'more control by virtue of being recognizably *incomplete*' (Sidnell 2010: 56). Thereafter, the sequence goes '(.)' then ' um: (.) ' then '(.5) um: (0.8) '.

These more risky pause points are thus of increasing length, and the latter two are tentatively reserved by Yv, as it were, through the use of a preceding extended 'um', indicating that there is thinking going on which presages the possibility of more talk to come after the pause that is about to occur.

So what Yv is doing is offering increasing periods of time to the researcher, but it is not clear that the thing that Yv wants the researcher to do during these opportunities is to respond with selection-of-turn talk. It is perhaps that Yv is offering the researcher the chance, the increasing chance, to give her a positive acknowledgement token, such as the 'yeah' in turn 05. And when such positive acknowledgement is not given, even after the extended pause of ' (.5) um: (0.8) ', then Yv gives an unambiguous transition-relevance place by completing the turn with her summarising statement.

These component turn-constructural units may therefore have a subtext or characteristic of being assessment-requesting questions where the *absence* of a positive assessment, in this case in the form of a positive acknowledgement token, as a response warrants attention by the speaker (Sidnell 2010: 49). Sidnell also notes a couple of examples (2010: 165-166) of complex turns where assessable information is offered (in these cases, an amount of rent) which have multiple possible completion points or intra-unit points (e.g. pauses) where a positive acknowledgement token might have been given and where such a token from the co-participant is not immediately forthcoming, hence the need to provide further opportunities. In one of these examples, Sidnell describes the use of ' um: (.)' as an alert that an assessment has been noted as missing; and this may be what Yv is indicating when she uses her ' um: (.) ' in turn 06.

So Sidnell remarks that recipient assessments, as well as other elements such as displays of recognition, may occur *within* a current turn-constructural unit, and that when such assessments are not given then

‘participants may orient to them as missing’ (Sidnell 2010: 167). In this case, consisting of turns 04 and 06, there appear to be a number of pauses that do not really coincide with *genuine* transition-relevance places, and which may then be *provided opportunities for in-turn positive acknowledgement*, and when none of these are taken up (except the first in turn 05), Yv orients to their omission by constructing an unambiguous turn-completion phrase in the form of a summarising statement, which incidentally indicates that her list of candidate understandings *could have gone on*, so that the now accountable reason (by the researcher) for her completing her turn at this point is the *absence of positive acknowledgement tokens*.

Returning to the correction-invitation device, the device here then takes the form of multiple candidate understandings in a kind of Dutch auction where the researcher can take his turn at the first place he chooses. This turn might be in the form of the provision of a positive acknowledgement token, it could be more extensive talk, but in the absence of either there will be a cumulative weight of *absence* of positive acknowledgement building up and by implication reducing the perceived relevance to the topic at hand (in the eyes of the co-participant) of the speaker’s talk. So in a Dutch auction, the absence of bids cumulatively lowers the value of the goods on offer.

But none of the ‘candidate understandings’ offered are the type of answer that the researcher is looking for. The researcher interprets this talk as being ‘concerning productivity’ in the sense that the talk is about various technical measures of output, just as productivity is a technical measure of output. This was the researcher’s interpretation in situ, and remains the researcher’s interpretation now.

Thus, Yv is offering an interpretation of the project of the question as being about ‘what technical measures of output are used in my work’.

### 8.5.1 Being explicit about being literal

Eventually, the researcher starts to realise that his attempts to explain the literal nature of the original question have not come off, and so in turn 07 he cuts across Yv, anticipating the unambiguous transition-relevance place she is now about to give, and is himself somewhat agitated and unable initially to be coherent ( ' [ right so that so those (.2) so the, ' ).

Yv coughs, presumably to remind the researcher that he is in a conversation and so a degree of conversational competence is to be expected, and perhaps also that an *account* of why none of her proffered candidate understandings were met with a positive acknowledgement token, beyond an initial one. In response, the researcher masters his panic and tries to focus on asking the literalness question again (turn 09), but it is still not clear enough, prompting only a 'hm:' response from Yv (turn 10), perhaps indicating an acknowledgement from Yv that her interpretation of the project of the question is not agreed and also some element of doubt as to how she should be interpreting the researcher's new question. In particular, she may be indicating that the 'account of why' given by the researcher is not sufficiently clear. In this case it might not be so much doubt as dissatisfaction that she is demonstrating.

From the researcher's perspective, the restatement of Yv's words from turns 04 and 06 in turn 09 in the form 'retention the: the success:' seems unlikely itself to be a cause of doubtfulness on Yv's part. Retention was Yv's own word from turn 04, while the researcher's use of the word 'success' refers back to Yv's own use of 'success rate' around minute 4 as a measure of completion outcomes (see Excerpt 2).

The difficulty that the researcher has is that the researcher cannot respond to Yv's correction-invitation device with a different example illustrating the project of the question, because there is no project - it is a literal question. So the researcher in turn 11 can see little alternative but to try yet another

form of the question, trying to be even more explicit on the question of *literalness*, coming up with ‘ . . . do you ever use the word productivity?’. But this version emphasising the literalness does in fact give an account of why the researcher did not give any positive acknowledgement during Yv’s response in turn 06.

As a result in turn 12, Yv, having tried the ‘plus’ version of the answer first which gave her the opportunity of exerting some influence over the conversational direction but having been stonewalled by the researcher in this attempt, now gives the ‘period’ answer, in this case “no”-period. Yv says ‘no’ with what might be some expression of dejection, wariness, defensiveness, perhaps slightly defeated, though in saying ‘no’ she may also be reacting to the more explicit articulation of the literal nature of the question given by the researcher in turn 11. Even so, in saying no, Yv may still have felt that she was thereby risking the conversation going in a pre-planned, unknown-to-her direction.

However, it does seem that at this point the repairs initiated by first the researcher as a self-repair in turn 01 to repair the question preference, and then the repair in understanding (of the project of the question) initiated by Yv in turn 04, are complete.

But ‘no’ is such a short answer. The researcher’s concern at this point is whether, after this relatively complex set of exchanges, Yv is just saying no without really meaning it. So in turns 13 and 15, the researcher seeks clarification and shared agreement about what has been said, starting out ‘no ok so you’re just saying’ to express this.

The researcher thus reformulates his understanding of what Yv has said in these two turns. In turn 13 he suggests that he has used the word productivity, and that Yv has answered with the terms she can think of that they use that are the *closest* to productivity.

To this formulation, in turn 14 Yv assents without pause ( ‘ <yeah> ’ ), in a positive manner, the lengthening in this case indicating a degree of positive emphasis, and with a tinge of relief. This ‘yeah’ is said in a much brighter fashion than the ‘no’ of turn 12.

In the next turn, turn 15, the researcher restates this connection between the measures and productivity from ‘closest’ to ‘like’, and seeks confirmation that despite the likeness or closeness, the measures are not called (i.e. referred to as) productivity.

To this Yv replies ‘no’ twice (turn 16), but in a more thoughtful, definite tone than the ‘no’ of turn 12. The repetition here suggests that the repetition of the question in turn 11 in a fairly similar form in turn 15 by the researcher may have suggested to Yv that something had been missing from the answer she had given in turn 12, the simple ‘no’.

At this point, the researcher thinks Yv is done, and in turn 17 indicates that, in his view, what she has said is fine, aiming to indicate that the repetition of the question was *not* done because something was deemed as missing in the answer in turn 12. The researcher then begins to turn attention to the next question ( ‘n[ow’ at the end of turn 17). This turn is thus, or would be, an evaluative comment designed to maintain trust and confidence as a prelude to initiating a transition into another topic (van den Berg 1996: 18).

The ‘n[ow’ is significant for two reasons. Firstly, it surely indicates that the researcher is moving onto his next topic. Rather like a ‘misplacement marker’ such as ‘by the way’ (Sidnell 2010: 3), ‘now’ is used by the researcher to communicate that what he is about to say does not follow on completely naturally from the previous talk; it serves as a temporally expressed dividing line between the coming talk and the past talk, a warning to the other participant that a shift is happening and particular attention therefore needs to be paid, rather like a ‘double bend’ road sign.

The second interesting point is that the 'now' is uttered at almost the same time as Yv starts her turn 18. From this point on, two conversations are in train, Yv on the current topic and the researcher on the prospective topic, a situation requiring repair.

## 8.6 PREMATURE TOPIC SHIFT

From Yv's perspective, what then happened over turns 12, 14 and 16?

Based on the fine distinctions of expression, difficult to express in the transcript, Yv's tone changed from defensive to relieved to thoughtful.

If Yv had been expecting to be taken down a pre-planned direction unknown to her when she gave her "no"-period reply in turn 12, then this could explain her defensiveness at that point. When that pre-planned direction failed to materialise during turn 13, with the researcher instead choosing to focus on summarising his view of what she had answered to and asking for her confirmation, this may have produced relief in turn 14

And when the researcher continued his strategy of seeking further clarification in turn 15, Yv may have fully realised that the question as asked was not in fact a question with a questioner-preferred answer, nor was it a question with a project. It was in fact a question to be interpreted literally.

So that, on these lines, an interpretation of Yv's thoughts behind turn 16, 'no [no]', might be 'now I've got it, let me think'. That is, shared understanding of the original question as a literal question, asking whether the concept of productivity was used or not, may have at this point been arrived at.

If this is the case, then Yv realises that in the absence of a pre-planned direction put in train by the researcher she has the opportunity of influencing the direction of the conversation, and turning her "no"-period answer into a "no"-plus. It is also possible that Yv might still have felt some

element of having given a dispreferred response in turn 12 ( 'no' ), perhaps stimulated by the researcher's repetition of his question in turn 15 inadvertently suggesting something inadequate in the original answer, and therefore left Yv now wanting to give an account for her having answered in the dispreferred way (Sidnell 2010: 79).

Whether this is the case or not, during turn 17 the researcher is preparing the ground for a transition onto the next planned research topic, and this introduction of the next topic is presaged by the 'n[ow]' in turn 17. This next topic is that of how Yv *personally* views the concept of productivity (see section 5.6), after the researcher had established to his own in situ satisfaction that Yv was not aware of the usage of the word productivity within a work situation, during turns 03 to 16 but particularly 11 to 16, and this the researcher asks during turn 19. This question on the new topic is asked in a quite extended form, thus:

yeah yeah yeah yeeah - so (.) so you personally - now not what your - but you personally (.7) the concept of productivity (.5) do you find - how do you react personally to that? (.) do you find that useful (.) kind of idea (.) in your (.) work? (.) or not - do you think it totally antagonistic to y'? completely wrong? or, (researcher, turn 19)

However, during turn 17, the preparation turn, Yv has *already produced an interruption* with turn 18 where Yv starts her talk just as the researcher starts on the next topic with 'n[ow]' at the end of turn 17. Yv's turn 18 is further development of her previous 'no [ no' answer in turn 16 (itself interrupted by the researcher by turn 17), consisting of '[ because we're not selling and buying'.

This is an interesting piece of overlapping talk. The initial part of the researcher's talk in turn 17 ( '[ ↑that's: that's fine' ) has the characteristics of a *pre-topic shift assessment* (Sidnell 2010: 235). In this situation, Yv may therefore be anticipating such a topic shift and ' "counteracting a recognizable move toward closure of the topic" ' (Jefferson 1993: 14 in



Sidnell 2010: 236) by interrupting as soon as it is recognisable as such when the researcher starts saying 'now'. Close re-listening shows that Yv's start is not exactly at the start of the researcher's 'now', but at the point where 'nau' as in the starting part of 'now' had been enunciated.

Yv's turn 18 starts with the conjunction 'because' which *explicitly links* the turn to her previous turn, another common characteristic of such situations as described by Sidnell (2010: 237). It thus looks likely that Yv is actively preventing the closure of the current topic, and has thus initiated an anticipatory repair of a prematurely closed topic.

This interruption (turn 18) caused the researcher surprise, as he thought that Yv was done with her answer. The researcher's interpretation, combining the questioner-preferred answer analysis above with the in situ experience of surprise, is that turn 18 represents Yv exerting control over the interview, taking it in a direction she has chosen.

As well as two medium-length pauses during the topic-initiating question, turn 19 also evidences a degree of disfluency after the topic-initiating question in the form of a number of short pauses while the researcher adds a list of qualifiers ( 'do you find that useful (.) kind of idea (.) in your (.) work? (.) or not' ). Each of these pauses is a plausible point at which Yv could respond, though she does not do so, perhaps because she is still thinking along the lines of 'selling and buying'.

When the researcher lists another qualifier, that the concept of productivity might be 'totally antagonistic to y'? completely wrong?', Yv does react, offering turn 20: 'yeah - because it's another ((rustle)) (.8) box:'.

Before considering turn 20 and subsequent turns, it is worthwhile considering what was going on in turn 19, including the researcher's contemporaneous thoughts, in detail.

Turn 19 occurs just after turn 18 where Yv had anticipated and attempted to avoid the topic shift initiation by the researcher at the end of turn 17 ( 'n[ow' ) by the use of overlapping talk.

The researcher's thoughts at this point are of interest. The first feeling on hearing Yv start simultaneously with his 'now' was one of surprise, that Yv had more to say. This feeling occurred, if the researcher remembers accurately, after his closure of the previous topic through the summarising assessment at the beginning of turn 17 ( '↑that's: that's fine' ), but *before* the new topic could reasonably be considered to have been agreed by Yv to have opened, which would happen at the earliest after the receipt by Yv of 'now' and with no repair initiated by Yv.

This surprise was felt during the hearing of the words. The *sense* of the words arrived later in his head, essentially after the researcher considered (at one level anyway) the new topic opened. Ironically, this timing somehow had the effect of the researcher understanding the sense as being connected with the new topic, and not as an attempt at premature topic shift repair. In the context then of the *sense* of Yv's words together with the new topic, the surprise switched to excitement that Yv had actually said something about productivity, and the researcher could now explore this through the new topic.

The 'yeah yeah yeah yeeah' at the beginning of turn 19 is then parsed as follows. The first couple of 'yeah's are (almost) minimal attention-giving through an acknowledgement token (Sidnell 2010: 234) which acknowledges the *hearing* of Yv's talk in turn 18, and as such is situated before the new topic is opened and thus counts as prior talk. The following 'yeah yeeah', with a bit of a lilt in the final yeah, is then an expression not exactly of surprise, but of the subsequent associated excitement that accompanied the arrival of the *sense* of Yv's turn 18 talk in the researcher's

mind, which is now (as he remembers) being interpreted in the context of the *new* topic.

During turn 19, the researcher is thus operating simultaneously with both the old and new topics in his mind. During the rest of the turn, the researcher first articulates the new topic, that it is about how Yv reacts personally to the topic of productivity, and then goes on to give a couple of examples of what such a personal reaction might be. These are 'do you think it totally antagonistic' and 'completely wrong'. Now strangely, even as he was saying this talk the researcher was aware that these examples were just not good examples of what he was trying to express. That is, the researcher's word selection was not working effectively in the context of the new topic, now supposed to be open by the researcher.

The state of the topic was thus ambiguous, even within the researcher's own mind. What, then, were the mechanics of the repair process that resulted in the disambiguation of the topic?

#### 8.6.1 The mechanics of topic disambiguation

Yv's response to this ambiguous situation was to provide an answer that had a 'blank' in it: 'yeah - because it's another ((rustle)) (.8) box:' (turn 20). That is, the pause of 0.8 seconds *could* be a place where some additional phrase or word might go, and a hearer (generally) has a facility to supply candidate understandings for situations where words are obscured or missed, e.g. by laughter, coughing or other noise (for example Sidnell 2010: 26).

In this context, then, as the researcher hears the silence, he virtually automatically (as everyone does virtually automatically) attempts alternative projections of what Yv is about to say or, as new words become available, might be saying; an opportunity enriched simply by the availability of the pause. The type of words that are supplied (virtually automatically) by the

researcher to fill in the possible blank could then reveal under which topic the researcher's word selection capability is operating; and if so, this should be displayed in his answer.

The form of this turn of Yv's may thus cause the relevant topic under which the researcher is now for practical purposes operating to *become manifest* (both to Yv *and* to the researcher) during the course of the researchers response in turn 21, through the way the researcher's word selection operates at this point. 'For practical purposes' refers to the fact that it is *practically* difficult to have a conversation if the ability to select appropriate words in real time is compromised (e.g. see Wilkinson 1995 on aphasia).

This analytic approach then represents an application of the 'next turn proof procedure' (Hutchby and Wooffitt 2008: 13) to interpret Yv's turn 20; a turn whose meaning the researcher had otherwise found opaque and difficult to elucidate. The purpose of the turn is deduced analytically through inspection of the *next* turn, by seeing what it actually accomplished in situ.

Here the researcher is not arguing that Yv deliberately produced turn 20 with a pause in the middle. On re-listening carefully, there is no indication of there being any words actually suppressed during the pause, though there was some rustling around and just after the word 'another', not loud enough to obscure the word at all but perhaps indicating some tension. The researcher is rather arguing that it *was in fact* produced in this form. A reason might be that the ambiguity of topics present in the researcher's mind during turn 19 may have in some way disconcerted Yv, and this disconcert shows through in the uneven pacing present in turn 20.

Hutchby and Wooffitt (2008: 56) give a brief discussion of disfluency, in the context of the progressional onset of overlap, based on Jefferson (1986). Progressional onset of overlap may occur where there is some disfluency in talk and the next speaker 'suggests a completion in order to move the

conversation forward'. Such progressional overlap would thus be (an attempt at) self-initiated other-repair (e.g. Hutchby and Wooffitt 2008: 60).

Yv, in reaction to the disfluency evident in turn 19, does *not* produce progressional overlap. Instead, what happened in practice is that Yv's response also evidenced a degree of disfluency; so that the disfluency of turn 19 becomes reflected back through Yv's turn 20. This then has the effect of turning a (possible) instigation of self-initiated other-repair (if Yv had helped out in turn 20) into self-initiated *self-repair*, with the repair taken up in the subsequent turn 21. And it could be, though this is indeed speculation, that the cause of disfluency in Yv's turn 20 is as a result of a similar process as the researcher has described as operating to create the disfluency in turn 19, making use of his auto-ethnographic reflections on how he was thinking in situ.

That is, at the start of turn 20 Yv is simply responding to the researcher's talk of turn 19. So that this fluent turn start has the characteristic of being topic-continuing talk, the topic being the new topic which Yv, though, has not yet acknowledged. But, when it comes to the selection of the word after the fluent 'yeah - because it's another' (which does not include any particular topic-specific words requiring delicacy of selection - these words could all be used in relation to almost *any* topic), a problem arises.

This problem (the researcher conjectures) is that the word-selection processes operating in Yv's mind present a word relevant to the old topic (such as 'tick box'), and this creates a hiatus in speech as Yv assesses the disjunction between this possible utterance (sourced from the old topic) and its production under the new topic (of personal reaction). This hiatus then becomes evident in the (0.8) pause (and possibly the preceding ((rustle)) which partly overlaps 'another' and partly overlaps the pause), and the word actually produced is some kind of compromise word ( 'box:' ).

In such a way the disfluency reflecting the ambiguity of topic of turn 19 becomes fairly inadvertently reflected in Yv's response in turn 20. Had Yv been more consciously aware of the topic ambiguity, she may well have been able to make a repair through progressional overlap, or similar, in turn 20. But in the absence of such conscious awareness, Yv's perhaps inadvertent reflection of the researcher's disfluency seems to have been, *in practice*, sufficient to allow the researcher to progress to self-repair in turn 21, as set out above, and in detail below.

So, if the topic under which the researcher's word selection was operating during turn 21 was made manifest to Yv and the researcher in the manner suggested, then close inspection of turn 21 by the analyst should also reveal this.

Turn 21 starts with an interpretation, 'so it's not a relevant', followed by a follow-up question, 'so would you think – you think it's (.2) worse than (.1) not being relevant - it's (.8) or: (.8) just (1.0) don't care about it?'.

The question is, what topic is in play where, and what does this reveal?

The initial talk happens immediately and betrays no signs of word selection problems. The phrase 'not a relevant' is not redolent of personal reaction, the new topic, but seems rather to fit with the previous topic which is more about productivity in the work context. On the contrary, 'don't care about it?' does seem more relevant to a *personal* reaction, and is preceded by very significant word selection problems, 'it's (.8) or: (.8) just (1.0)'. The intervening phrase then might mark the transition between the two topics, 'so would you think – you think it's (.2) worse than (.1) not being relevant', with the repeated 'you think' and the use of the fairly simple word 'worse' being indicative of this transition to a more personal reaction.

This analysis seems to confirm, and seems to make explicit to both speaker and hearer, that when talking in respect of the previous topic the

researcher's word selection ability is functioning alright, but when the new topic is attempted it becomes significantly impaired.

Thinking back, at the beginning of the turn the researcher was aware that he made an immediate judgement, almost without thinking, of what Yv had meant, something along the lines of 'yeah because it's another tick box' or 'yeah because its just another box', though he did not explicitly articulate an exact wording in his head, only sensing this kind of meaning indirectly; but he was initially sure that Yv was meaning that productivity was not relevant to her work.

When, though, the researcher then tried to focus on what Yv had actually said and design a follow-up question to draw out further her personal reaction that followed on from her words, there just wasn't enough there, in her actual words, to draw on. Thus, he had initially *subconsciously* filled in the blank in some way, but when he more consciously focused on the meaning in terms of the topic of personal reaction, this filling-in fell away, leaving little to get hold of.

Effectively then, in the rest of the turn the researcher drew back from pursuing the 'personal reaction' angle, falling back on less emotive terminology: 'if I said to you - you've got to become more productive (.2) what would you (.2) would you think that would help you be [ more effective?'. This turn ending is phrased not in terms of what was Yv's personal reaction, but what would help her be effective, with the word 'effective' referring back to the original question that initiated the 'old' topic. This seems to constitute a practical abandonment of the new topic.

Yv acknowledges this abandonment, in turn 22, with an overlapping 'yeauh' just after the phrase 'would help you' is used by the researcher, and turns immediately to the topic of what is different *in her work* that is at odds with the concept of 'productivity'. In this turn she focuses on 'performance' as

being the thing that is of help, and not 'productivity', thus: '↑performance (.3) but not (.) productivity .pt (.4) '.

#### *8.6.2 Confirming the return topic*

After the researcher has tried unsuccessfully to open a new topic, the next four turns seem to be about the researcher first needing to confirm the topic that he has returned to, and then validating the interpretations he has made while the topic was ambiguous, starting from the last point of certainty. This confirmation of topic needs to be instigated primarily by the researcher as from Yv's perspective the topic never shifted.

So, in turn 23 the researcher explicitly refers back to the point, in turns 11 and 12, when the original topic was successfully established. This is done by the researcher, in turn 23, first acknowledging Yv's talk in turn 22 through 'yeah' and then refraining the key point about literalness from turn 11, 'I'm just talking about the word [ productivity'. Here, 'word' is the key word, used in the phrase 'the word productivity' both in turn 11 which caused the establishment of the literalness of the question, and again here in the reference back.

As soon as the researcher says the word 'word', Yv applies 'recognitional overlap' (Sidnell 2010: 53), saying 'productivity' (turn 24) at the same time as the researcher. This seems to signify that Yv understands what the researcher is saying. Then Yv and the researcher jointly leave a pause of over a second, and this seems to infer no repair is required to this agreed understanding and so the topic to which the conversation has now returned is indeed the one that was in place prior to the researcher's attempt to open a new topic.

Within the context of the original topic, turns 19 to 24 thus form the first part of a double insertion sequence in which firstly topic ambiguity, disambiguation, and confirmation of disambiguation happen, and then



subsequently the clarification of meanings of the talk that occurred during the first part of the insertion sequence is worked through. This second part of the double-insertion sequence, made up of turns 25 to 28, is discussed in subsection 8.6.4 below.

### 8.6.3 Ending the first insertion sequence

In the mean time, the first part of the insertion sequence must be *known to be ended* by both participants, and this seems to be the significance of the pause of 1.2 seconds at the end of turn 24, and indeed the way turn 25 starts ( ‘ n’ - its - it ssounds ’ ). Referring to Sidnell, and Hutchby and Wooffitt, on insertion sequences, a number of examples are given (Sidnell 2010: 103-104; Hutchby and Wooffitt 2008: 115-120, 169-170). These are ended in the following ways:

Move that thing that('s in the lock)/(yo- in the door). (Sidnell 2010: 103, excerpt 13 line 03)

[°hhhhhh] hhugh. (Sidnell 2010: 104 excerpt 16 lines 30-31)

(0.9) .hh (Hutchby and Wooffitt 2008: 116, excerpt 1 lines 17-18)

(1.0) su- su- slightly (Hutchby and Wooffitt 2008: 169, excerpt 5 lines 6-7)

(0.4) well (0.4) (Hutchby and Wooffitt 2008: 169, excerpt 6 lines 5-6)

These ends of insertion sequences are all marked in some way. In the first, one of two children seems to physically point out the object that she is talking about as part of a repair of understanding. In the second, the end of the insertion is marked by overlapping soft out-breath, which in context seems to be a kind of recognitional overlap signifying humorous understanding, and then the more emphasised acknowledging ‘hhugh.’ The next is marked by a (0.9) pause and then an inbreath, which is often an announcement of talk (Hutchby and Wooffitt 2008: 72).

The next is also marked by a long pause, (1.0), and then by talk marked as tentative through stuttering ('su- su- slightly'). The final example has two medium pauses of (0.4) surrounding the dispreference marker 'well' (Hutchby and Wooffitt 2008: 47), the dispreference in this instance necessarily referring to the pre-insertion sequence as the co-participant's talk within the insertion sequence consists only of 'yeah'.

These examples show that it is common to end insertion sequences with either an action that actively marks the end of the insertion sequence or a pause, which allows both participants to see that the other has no more to say in relation to the insertion sequence. This is then followed by some utterance that marks out *something* as remarkable. As the next turn in the original sequence (before the insertion sequence was inserted) remains conditionally relevant, the continuation of that sequence is something that is remarkable but does not necessarily need to be explicitly stated as being referred to when the 'remarking on' is effected. The continuation of the pre-existing sequence thus forms the default referent for an announcement or a 'remarking on'.

The first example is an exception, in that the talk is accompanying physical activity. The talk given above only has an utterance-action marking out the end of the insertion sequence; there is no subsequent talk that is an announcement of something remarkable. This utterance-action consists of talk apparently accompanying and explicating the physical pointing out of the object that was in doubt, which has the effect of ending the insertion sequence (which was a repair of understanding as to what object was being referred to that should be moved to allow a door to be closed). The mutuality of intersubjective understanding that the insertion sequence was completed was probably accomplished in this instance by mutual monitoring of the direction of sight.

There is then no subsequent announcement in the next speaker's turn of a return to the pre-insertion sequence. This next turn is a simple 'okay,' apparently agreeing to move the object so the door could be closed. The form of the announcement of the return to the pre-insertion sequence, which was a request to move the object, was probably in this case the actual performance of the request, i.e. the actual movement of the object. There would then be no need for the talk to indicate in some way that the insertion sequence was being left and the pre-insertion sequence was being rejoined, as the action of moving the object would itself accomplish that.

In the four other cases, though, there is always the possibility that the next talk after the apparent finish of the insertion sequence *could* in fact be a continuation of the insertion sequence, so what seems to happen is that the next talker rules out this ambiguity by expressing a marking, and this marking is taken by both participants to refer to the event that remains conditionally relevant and so does not need explicit articulation, which is the return to the pre-insertion sequence.

If no *event* were marked in this way, then it might be that a participant might assume that no event had happened and that the subsequent talk remained part of the insertion sequence. This marker of an event, if the elucidation given here is on the right track, is given in a range of ways, by 'huh.' in the second example, the announcing inbreath '.hh' in the third example, the stuttering in the fourth example, and the dispreference marker 'well' in the final example.

In the interview with Yv, the end of the first part of the insertion sequence is signified by the talk in turns 24 and 25 of ' (1.2) n' - its - it ssounds', which fits the pattern of an indication of the end of the insertion sequence through mutual silence, followed by 'marking' talk, in this case talk that indicates tentativeness in the form of a false start and then a slight stutter, with the

tentativeness being able to be taken (by the researcher in situ) as likely to be interpreted by Yv as indicating a tentative return to the pre-insertion sequence, which was talk about the original topic before the topic-ambiguity surfaced.

The two cases which include stuttering seem to work as markers carrying a notification of (re)interpretation. That is, the responder is saying that he/she will now be continuing from the co-participant's talk just prior to the start of the insertion sequence, but that at the same time he/she will be making an interpretation of that talk taking account of the insertion sequence, that is an interpretation that depends on or is affected by some of the talk that occurred during the insertion sequence.

In Hutchby and Wooffitt (2008: 170) this reinterpretation is accomplished by a 'formulation' (see Hutchby and Wooffitt 2008: 147-149) that the responder had used during the insertion sequence, a formulation producing a crucially different version of the pre-insertion question to which the responder now responds. In the interview with Yv, the researcher is about to *attempt* to recover relevant 'meaning' from the inserted talk, topical content that could be relevant to the unambiguous topic of productivity in the work context.

The stuttering thus seems to signify that the return to the pre-insertion sequence should not be taken as implicitly incorporating a simple acknowledgement of receipt of the last utterance of the pre-insertion sequence. In the interests of maintaining intersubjective understanding, it seems to constitute a warning to the utterer of that last pre-insertion utterance that the utterer's assumption about how the utterance had been understood should be kept under review.

The fact that the researcher in practice found (as described below) no content actually recoverable from the insertion talk does not affect the fact that he was about to attempt its recovery; in addition, it was the case that

he did need to actually recover the full meaning or import of what Yv had said in turn 18 ( '[ because we're not selling and buying' ), as he had not been fully attending to it while it was being uttered as the researcher was at that time focused on attempting to introduce a new topic.

#### 8.6.4 Validating the researcher's understandings

So before the talk on the unambiguous topic could be safely pursued in earnest, there were aspects of the very local context that, to the researcher at least, needed clarification. Accordingly, the next thing that the researcher seems to do, in turns 25 and 27, is to sort through *his understandings of Yv's talk* between turn 11, when the original topic was established, and the point when the abandonment of the prematurely opened new topic was confirmed by Yv by saying 'yeauh' at the beginning of turn 23. The *order* of this sort seems to be in terms of the certainty with which the researcher had made his original in situ interpretations, with the most certain interpretations (measured according to the researcher's own in situ degree of conviction) taken first.

This is an example of a repair process that requires ' "back tracking" ' because the repair did not occur, or in this case was not completed, in close proximity to the original source of trouble, a relatively unusual occurrence in talk (Hutchby and Wooffitt 2008: 64). The elucidation of this process of clarification, given in the following paragraphs, draws on the researcher's auto-ethnographic recollections of what he was thinking while the talk was in progress. This simultaneous thought process was rapid and not fully internally consciously articulated.

To accomplish this back tracking and re-confirmation of understandings, the researcher starts in turn 25 with the 'no's given by Yv during turns 12 and 16, which seem to be re-confirmed by Yv's quiet latched '=°n↓o°=' in turn 26. The next element is then 'not relevant' (shortened to 'not') at the beginning of turn 27. This was his initial fairly certain interpretation of the

meaning of Yv's turn 20 ( 'yeah - because it's another ((rustle)) (.8) box:' ). But this interpretation, the researcher quickly realises, must be discarded as he made the interpretation while the topic was ambiguous in his mind.

The next interpretation the researcher considers was the interpretation that Yv's turn 20 was in answer to the question 'completely wrong?' in turn 19, indicating agreement that it was wrong. This appears as the cut-short sentence 'it's got the wrong' in turn 27, but again it becomes clear to the researcher that this interpretation needs to be abandoned for the same reason of prevailing topic ambiguity.

Finally he comes to the only other piece of talk that Yv made between turns 11 and 22, 'because we're not selling and buying' in turn 18, which he had acknowledged but not really *attended* to, and must now consciously try and recall ('how did you describe it'), coming up with 'it's not about products'. This formulation, as the researcher recollects, was formed by a collation of 'not' from Yv's turn 18 and Yv's use of the word 'product' back in turn 04. A formulation was necessitated because the researcher was unable to bring into his mind the more specific exact words used by Yv in turn 18. The *sources* on which this formulation were based the researcher judged as valid, because the sourcing talk was uttered, or at least started, before the researcher had completed the initiation of the opening of the new topic; and so he articulates the formulation in full, thus in effect seeking Yv's confirmation of its validity.

Yv implicitly confirms the validity of the formulation in turn 28 ( 'it's about performance' ), and in so doing adds the other talk she had made (after the agreed re-establishment of the original topic, but before the confirmation process). At this point, common agreement has been reached, and confirmed, about what the topic now is and what can be taken as relevant to this topic from the prior talk in turns 11 through to the end of turn 22.

That is, from the original establishment of the topic through to just before the start of the confirmation and validation process.

In turn 29 the researcher gives a positive acknowledgement token to 'performance' ( 'right' ), which returns the conversation to the point in turn 23 after he had said 'yeah', again as positive acknowledgement of Yv's talk on 'performance' in turn 22, just before the point when he began the confirmation and validation process, and the conversation can now continue as it were from that point.

Thus turns 25 through to 28 form an additional 'insertion sequence' (Sidnell 2010: 103) addressing issues or doubts that the researcher has in orienting to Yv's talk (both prior and to come) after the topic disambiguation has been completed and confirmed, the repair being enacted through a process of validation of which elements of Yv's prior talk (and the researcher's interpretation of this talk) remain relevant.

#### 8.6.5 Ending the second insertion sequence

In this second case, though, the insertion sequence has ended with a seamless re-entrance into the prior talk just before the second (additional) insertion sequence started (enacted by the repetition of the 'talk about performance/positive acknowledgment' pair), which has the effect of showing that the insertion sequence is complete, and thus talk can continue on (almost) immediately in turn 30, and there is no requirement for, for example, a lengthy pause to assess whether the insertion sequence has finished, as it mutually demonstrably has. Yv, though, does formally mark the continuation of the pre-insertion sequence with an inbreath and short pause ( 'h (.2)' ) - the inbreath often acting as an announcement of talk, as has been described above (Hutchby and Wooffitt 2008: 72).

Again, the relevant thing that is being announced here seems not to be the *fact* of the coming talk itself, but that there is something significant or

'announcible' about the coming talk, the announcibility being that it forms the continuation of the pre-insertion sequence. This is an event that remains conditionally relevant and so Yv can reasonably assume that the researcher is likely to interpret an announcement, that is not otherwise specified, as being about this expected event.

So, in summary, the proposed conversation analytic elucidation of turns 17 to 29 is as follows. Turns 17 (end) and 18 initiate a period of topic ambiguity initiated through overlapping talk. Turns 19 to 21 are the repair through disambiguation. Turns 22 and 23 (start) represent the confirmation (by Yv) of the disambiguation process, and the acknowledgment of this confirmation. Turns 23 (remainder) and 24 are confirmation, initiated by the researcher, that the now unambiguous topic is as before the literal consideration of the use of productivity in the work context, echoing turns 11 and 12.

This ends the insertion sequence whose purpose is disambiguation, and the sequence is now ready to resume starting after Yv's turn 18 ( '[ because we're not selling and buying' ). The end of the insertion sequence is marked by an extended pause at the end of turn 24, and the 'jump-back' marker, using displayed tentativeness, at the beginning of turn 25.

Turns 25 to 28 then represent very local context clarification of the researcher's interpretation of some of Yv's talk, which is undertaken prior to this resumption. This process of clarification thus forms a second, additional insertion sequence. The conclusion of this clarification in turn 28, and the researcher's acknowledgement in turn 29 then match turns 22 and the first part of turn 23. This then provisionally ends the second insertion sequence.



This second insertion sequence has ended with talk that mirrors the point near the end of the first insertion sequence where the disambiguation was first confirmed.

The differences this second time through are that firstly it has already been confirmed that the now unambiguous topic is the literal consideration of the use of productivity in the work context, so it is unnecessary to *reconfirm* this; secondly, the original insertion sequence of disambiguation has already been confirmed as having been completed, in turns 24 (end) and 25 (start); and so this completion of the insertion sequence again does not need to be *reconfirmed*; and thirdly the researcher does not need to clarify *again* his interpretations, or signal *again* the possible reinterpretation of Yv's talk in turn 18 at the end of the original pre-insertion sequence, as these have already been clarified and signalled the first time through in turns 25 to 28.

It is thus possible now to make a simple jump back to the point at the end of the last turn of the pre-insertion sequence, which Yv now does in turn 30, announcing it with an inbreath ( 'h (.2)' ). This start of turn 30 thus forms the ultimately relevant second part of the talk marking the end of the original insertion sequence, the part marking the return to the pre-insertion sequence. The first part of this insertion-end marker was the (1.2) pause at the end of turn 24 marking the completion of the insertion, with the associated jump-back marker originally being enacted in a tentative form at the beginning of turn 25.

The non-tentative jump back marker at the beginning of turn 30 thus, in this interpretation, supersedes the previous tentative jump-back marker at the beginning of turn 25, the intervening second insertion sequence having removed the need for (further) in situ reinterpretation. The remainder of turn 30 then represents the continuation of the pre-insertion sequence, resuming talk from the original insertion point after the researcher's initial

acknowledging ‘yeah’s at the start of turn 19 (with the attempt to open the new topic in the remainder of turn 19 now being understood as forming part of the insertion sequence which effected its repair), with all intersubjective ambiguities of topic and in situ meaning now clarified.

## 8.7 TOPICAL CONTENT

After this analysis of the development of the shared understanding of the literalness of the question, and then the disambiguation of topics after the premature shift to a new topic, it is possible to identify the topical content that has been constructed in response to the researcher’s introduction of the topic of the use (or not) of productivity in Yv’s work context.

This consists of Yv’s responses in turns 12 and 16 that the word productivity is not used; and then turns 18 (‘because we’re not buying and selling’ ), 22 ( ‘↑performance (.3) but not (.) productivity .pt’ ), then turns 30 through to 36.

Thereafter (turns 37 to 39), the researcher provides a summarising assessment of the whole interview ( ‘(0.5) .hh OK (.5) brilliant’ ) and initiates closure with ‘thanks very much’, which Yv acknowledges with ‘thank you’ in turn 38 and does not indicate that she wishes to contribute any further talk, so the researcher closes with the talk ‘you’ve survived’ (turn 39), signifying completion as for Yv to have survived must mean that the experience has come to an end, to which Yv responds by laughing (turn 40).

Returning now to turns 30 to 36, the particular epistemic grounds (Sidnell 2010: 184) of Yv’s talk in response to the topic are shown in turns 30 and 32. In these, Yv gives extended personal reasoning or an account of *why* she thinks the fact that they are not buying and selling is important and why the concept of performance is more relevant to her work than productivity. These reasons are that ‘for me product is having: (.2) materials’ (turn 30),

acknowledged by a 'yeah' from the researcher in turn 31, 'and producing (. 8) umm an item at the end' (turn 32).

Then, in turn 33, the researcher draws the inference that 'that's not what you [ do', and Yv confirms that this is indeed what she was alluding to through the exact repetition of the phrase '[ that's not what we do' in turn 34, also using recognitional overlap by starting before the end of the researcher's turn-constructural unit (Hutchby and Wooffitt 2008: 56). This use of repetition to confirm an allusion is as described by Sidnell (2010: 73) based on Schegloff (1996: 161), and ten Have (2007: 163), and so it can be reasonably taken that Yv *is* confirming the interpretation.

In turn 35 the researcher acknowledges this confirmation ( 'yeah' ) and then draws a further inference that this is 'because you're (.) about people?', and again Yv confirms this through exact repetition of the allusion in turn 36, 'we're about people'. Then after a pause of 0.6 seconds, where the researcher could have continued inferencing if he had further inferences to add, Yv concludes her epistemic reasoning on the inappropriateness of the word productivity started in turn 30 through the ending talk of turn 36, 'and people are not items'.

These turns 30 to 36 therefore represent a *co-constructed* account of why Yv does not consider the word productivity useful in her work context. It seems evident from this co-construction that this account is not one that Yv has drawn into the talk as it were from memory; rather this account has actually been created *in situ*, and may not therefore have existed prior to the talk. It is thus not a report based on what she has seen, heard, thought, or otherwise experienced at work, or has heard from other people working in similar contexts.

This being so, Yv could not necessarily expect that someone else working in a similar context would produce the same account in a different research

interview, and thus the accountability of her talk, against what other participants might say, in the context of the research interviewing frame, is perhaps different for this talk than for her talk during the rest of the interview, which *can* be viewed as based on reports of what she has seen, heard, thought, or otherwise experienced at work, or has heard from other people working in similar contexts.

It is for this reason that the researcher concludes that the epistemic grounds of Yv's talk around productivity are different from the other topics discussed during the interview.

Returning to the actual topical content around productivity that was co-constructed during the interview, how does Yv structure her contribution to this topical content?

The main structure Yv uses is a series of what Baker describe, in the context of membership categorisation device analysis, as 'contrast pairs' (Baker 2004: 174) and which may be related to what Sacks describes as 'two-set classes' (1992a: 47).

These contrast pairs are as follows:

'we're not selling and buying' (turn 18)

'performance (.3) but not (.) productivity .pt' (turn 22)

'we're about people (.6) and people are not items' (turn 36)

Additional categories used by Yv are *box*, in the form 'yeah - because it's another ((rustle)) (.8) box:' (turn 20), though this category has been identified as part of the topic disambiguation repair and so has an uncertain status in terms of the context to which it is oriented, and *product* and *materials* in the form '.h (.2) for me product is having: (.2) materials' (turn 30). *Item* is itself introduced by Yv in connection with product in the form

'and producing (.8) umm an item at the end' (turn 32) as a continuation of turn 30.

So, from the point of view of membership categorisation device analysis and contrast pairs, in summary 'product', 'materials', 'items', and 'buying and selling' are all aspects of commerce and manufacture. From Yv's perspective, these are seen to contrast with the work she does with people.

## 8.8 INTERPRETING THE TOPICAL CONTENT

The researcher therefore provisionally interprets the topical content that Yv offers in the following way (but see the next section for a further interpretative nuance).

Firstly, the content relates to why she does not use the idea or word 'productivity' in relation to work, which she does not - this interpretation is dependent on the inferences that have been drawn during the analysis of the interview being correct, namely that a shared understanding, of what the question that was asked was, was in fact arrived at, and that this shared understanding was that the question asked should be interpreted literally.

Secondly, the reasoning or account for this not using the word productivity is that to her productivity is strongly associated with the world of commerce and manufacturing, and this contrasts with, is an alternative to, her world of work consisting of people and people's performance.

The implication is perhaps that her way of thinking about productivity and the commercial world does not overlap with her way of thinking about people and performance in her work. For this reason, the lack of overlap, 'productivity' is not *useful* to her when thinking about her work, basically because it brings the wrong things, unconnected things, to the forefront of her mind. The connotations are inappropriate.

It seems fairly clear, though, that this content has not been brought into the interview from an external world, it is not a report of a pre-existing situation in an external or internal world. Rather, it seems pretty clear that it is a construction or artefact of the research interview itself.

This is evident because of the amount of work the researcher had done previously and brought with him into the interview, and the work that the researcher and, particularly, Yv have done within the interview in coming to a shared agreement of the question that was asked; and secondly much of the content emerges in a strongly interactive set of sequences, which includes confirmed inferences from the researcher, and seems quite likely to have been thought through there and then by Yv in the interview.

Such a process is further dependent on the subjectivity that the respondent herself brings to the interview - the willingness to co-operate and work with the researcher to come to shared understandings. Perhaps this subjectivity is that of being a helper in research, though Yv did not make her subject position explicit during the interview, or after. In this case, too, the necessary role went perhaps further than normal in that in the passage analysed in detail the researcher really co-opts Yv into a position of co-analyst, analysing perhaps for the first time what her attitude to the word productivity actually is.

It seems likely then that this version of reality reported here is one that has been largely *constructed* by the implementation of the research process, particularly but not exclusively in this interview. It is not a version of reality that might be expected to be encountered in the day-to-day, though of course it could be. Because of this, the reporting of the findings and any discussions based on the findings need to be presented with care.

The analysis also shows that Yv's talk in turn 20, 'because it's another ((rustle)) (.8) box:', is ambiguous for a number of reasons. Firstly, it's

content is opaque because it is not clear what the meaning of 'another' is and it is not clear what particular aspect of 'boxiness' is being referred to. Secondly, it is ambiguous because it is not completely clear whether its production is in relation to the pre-existing topic, or the new topic of personal reaction that the researcher had tried to open. Thirdly it is ambiguous in terms of its intended action. Is it to provide an answer to the question(s) asked in turn 19, or is its purpose to initiate a repair of the ambiguity of topic present in turn 19?

Revealing his realist leanings at the time, the researcher's initial attempt at analysis undertaken within months of the interview included an *imaginative interpretation* of what in the outside world, or Yv's inner world, the talk 'yeah - because it's another ((rustle)) (.8) box:' was meant (by Yv) to signify.

A year later, it is now apparent to the researcher that it is an *assumption* that Yv meant it to signify anything in an internal or external world. An alternative interpretation is that its purpose was to effect something, it was performative, and from this perspective the thing that it *actually* effected was the flummoxing of the researcher during turn 21, leading to the disambiguation of the topic of talk.

Here, 'purpose' should not be taken to mean that Yv had this as a *conscious* purpose; it may simply be, as discussed earlier, that the uneven characteristics of the pacing of the talk that led to the researcher's confusion in turn 21 may have been an unconscious reflection of a disconcerting affect on Yv of the awkwardness of the researcher's talk in turn 19, which had also been produced while the topic of talk was ambiguous in the researcher's mind.

## 8.9 ALTERNATIVE ANALYTIC TRAJECTORIES

Before returning to the ethnographic thread of the thesis, and considering the findings of the conversation analysis in that light, the researcher will

discuss alternative conversation analytic trajectories that might have been taken or might be learnt from.

The researcher has put forward a particular conversation analytic trajectory of the post-51st minute passage of the interview with Yv, shown in transcript form in Excerpt 4, during which the topic of the use of the word productivity was initiated. This analytic trajectory starts with an interpretation of the discreet talk offered by the researcher as preamble to the topic-initiating question as a warning of a possible situational trap in the question; on this trajectory, Yv then orients to this warning by initially interpreting the question as one with a questioner-preferred answer; there is then a repair process during which the literal intention of the original question is intersubjectively established.

Yv then provides an answer to the literal question; at this point, the researcher initiates a move towards the next planned topic of Yv's *personal* reaction to the concept of productivity, while almost simultaneously, and probably as resistance to the signalled topic shift, Yv starts an account of the 'no' answer that she had given to the literal question. The resultant topic ambiguity then requires repair; when this repair is completed there is a passage of talk around the original topic, of productivity in the work context.

Alternative conversation analytic trajectories considered below are Rapley and Antaki's (1998) perspective on research interviewing evidencing deployment of techniques to exploit the knowledge differential between interviewer and respondent, and Roulston's (2001) re-analysis of a research interview showing how talk about moral and cultural worlds may not sit naturally within the traditional 'answer to a research question' analytic approach, a perspective also drawing on Rapley (2004).



Of these alternative analytic trajectories, the researcher sees Roulston (2001) as being particularly relevant to the analysis and findings presented in this chapter.

### 8.9.1 Rapley and Antaki (1998)

Rapley and Antaki (1998) offer an alternative interpretation of discreet talk. They describe a situation where cover identities, perspective-display series, discreet talk and shifts between particulars and generalities can all be used by the questioner in a research interview to privilege the questioner's views over the answerer's.

In their main exemplar, Rapley and Antaki (1998: 599-600) give three examples of discreet talk, lines 33-37 of Extract 8, lines 59-62 of Extract 9, and lines 57-59 of Extract 10. These three examples are in the context of the interviewer reformulating the respondent's utterances (Extracts 8 and 10) and asking a follow-up question based on one of the reformulations (Extract 9, which seems to follow straight on from Extract 10, though there is a small discrepancy in the line-numbering).

Discreet talk is, in this analytic trajectory, hearable as a signifier of a knowledge asymmetry (Rapley and Antaki 1998: 593); and therefore when placed in the context of reformulations of the respondent's talk has the effect of asserting the validity of the reformulation above the original talk, due to the 'greater knowledge' of the interviewer that the discreet talk has subtly but not explicitly alluded to.

The application of the discreet talk device to reformulations of the respondent's talk would thus seem to be an important aspect of the application of the device. In the case of the interview with Yv, in contrast, discreet talk was used prior to the asking of the topic-initiating question, and so was not being applied to privilege a reformulation over original talk.

It is true that the passage of talk following the topic-initiating question on 'community' in Rapley and Antaki (1998: 599, Extract 8 lines 13-32) has similarities with Yv's response in turn 04 and 06. In the analysis, these turns of Yv were interpreted as an extended correction-invitation device consisting of a chained series of candidate understandings.

In the same way, YB (the respondent in the Rapley and Antaki extracts) gives a number of candidate responses as to what aspect of community may be under consideration, for example: 'a group of people that are working together' (lines 13-14), 'a neighbourhood in a suburb' (lines 21-22), 'living at a residential college' (lines 25-26). These different candidate understandings are interspersed with a number of shorter and longer pauses, from (.) to (2 secs), marking possible transition-relevance places, which are not taken up by the interviewer, though the interviewer does utter some latched or overlapping 'um's during this talk, and one overlapping 'yep' towards the end.

These extended correction-invitation devices seem a quite common way for interviewees to, on their side, in fact also actively contribute to the work that interviewers have to do 'to practically show the interviewee the sort of talk we are expecting and are interested in' (Rapley 2012: 549).

However, while this talk shows up two of the characteristics present in Excerpt 4 and identified in subsection 7.3.3 as possible indications of 'interactional troubles', namely pauses and cutting-across or overlap, the third one of repetition or insistence is absent. At an equivalent point to line 32 when the list of candidate understandings in the Rapley and Antaki extract comes to an end, that is some 21 lines after the topic-initiating question, the researcher had in his interview with Yv re-asked three different versions of the original question (turns 03, 09 and 11 in Excerpt 4).

It is true that there is some repetition in the form of JK's (the questioner) responses at lines 16, 20 and 28 of Extract 8 (Rapley and Antaki 1998: 599), thus: '=Uhhm:m↓', '=Umm=' and '[u:mm]'. If these have some purpose perhaps as topic-shifters, in a similar way to the ' °mm.° ' found in the Rapley (2001) example of interactional troubles, then this would show some intersection of repetition or insistence at least with the Rapley (2001) example. But, referring back to the discussion of insistence in this example of interactional troubles given in subsection 7.3.5, there is no equivalent non-verbalised theme of quiet talk that insistently *refers back* to the original question, as was found with Rapley's example. There thus may be some repetition or insistence in Rapley and Antaki's exemplar, but it does not seem to be a 'referring back' insistence on some particular aspect of the original question.

Another important difference is the questioner's response to the answerer's extended correction-invitation device. In Rapley and Antaki, after a generalising (1998: 603) reformulation of the respondent's series of candidate understandings offered in the talk so far (1998: 599, Extract 8 lines 33-37; also shown as lines 34-38 on page 603), the interviewer asks for *further candidate understandings* using the words '>do you think anything else< makes up like a °community° ' (1998: 601, Extract 10 line 37). The generalisation made is described as being for the purpose of satisfying the 'demands of the social scientific research community' which 'require the interviewer to establish the multi-site relevance of the "sense of community" construct' (1998: 603).

In the interview with Yv, the researcher's response at the end of the series of candidate understandings offered by Yv is: ' [ right so that so those (.2) so the, ((Yv coughs)) retention the: the success: (1.0) do you describe those as productivity?' (Excerpt 4 turns 07-09 combined). This does indeed start with a reformulation, using a specific word used by Yv ( 'retention' ) and the word 'success' used to summarise a series of 'outcomes' that might be

construed as being successful outcomes. The key difference though is that the researcher then uses the summary of Yv's talk to attempt to link her talk with the original question, through a reformulation of the question using the demonstrative 'those', an example of the use of deictics within 'tying structures' for linking current with previous talk (Sidnell 2010: 226). This is then an attempt to create shared intersubjective understanding of the initial question, referencing Yv's prior talk to do so. It is not a request for further candidate understandings.

Applying the next turn proof procedure, this difference is shown up by the respondent continuing with alternative candidate understandings of 'community' in the Rapley and Antaki example (1998: 601, Extract 10 lines 38-52). But in the interview with Yv, no further candidate understandings are offered either in turn 10 ('hm:') or, after another reformulation of the question again referring back to Yv's prior talk, in turn 12 ('no'), or, after yet another, confirmatory reformulation covering turns 13 and 15 again referring back, in turn 16 ('no [ no' ).

So, in summary, while there are similarities between the post-51st minute passage of talk in the researcher's interview with Yv and the exemplar given in Rapley and Antaki (1998) in the form of discreet talk, generalising reformulation, and also the use by the answerer of an extended correction-invitation device in the form of a number of candidate understandings offered in a series of chained turn-constructual units, there are differences.

These differences are the position-within-sequence of the discreet talk; the absence of the pattern of interviewer repetition or insistence on an aspect of the topic-initiating question in the Rapley and Antaki exemplar which is though evident in the interview with Yv; and the response of the questioner at the end of the extended correction-invitation device, which in the interview with Yv is to use the proffered candidate understandings to

respecify the question and through this 'tying structure' to try to develop shared intersubjective understanding of the question, while in Rapley and Antaki's exemplar the response is a summary of the answerer's prior talk followed by an open-ended invitation to continue with further candidate understandings.

In the researcher's view, these differences would make it difficult to use Rapley and Antaki's (1998) exemplar as a model for analytic elucidation of Excerpt 4 without considerable work. Furthermore, the analytic dynamic is different with Rapley and Antaki opening their analysis of the interviewer's talk in their chosen exemplar by observing that the topic-initiating question is 'oriented to the prior existence of "the word community" as something which one could reasonably be expected to "think about" ' (1998: 596). The equivalent statement in regard to the interview with Yv would be that the researcher's talk was oriented to the prior existence of "the idea of productivity" as something about which one could reasonably be expected to say whether or not one had ever used it. This latter statement does not, in the researcher's opinion, carry quite the same force, and involves a weaker kind of prior existence involving perhaps recognition rather than active consideration.

#### 8.9.2 Roulston (2001)

Roulston (2001) moves from analysis as looking for answers to research questions towards a conversation analytic trajectory in terms of co-producing moral worlds that are revealed or explored during qualitative interviewing (2001: 287), whether or not these moral worlds can be made directly relevant to the initial research question(s). The point that interview-talk is not necessarily about the 'official topic' of the interview is also made by Rapley (2004: 16). There are then multiple analytic perspectives valid for particular sets of data.

Roulston uses conversation analysis to re-analyse an interview about music teaching. In doing so, she reveals a dynamic within the interview in which certain challenging questions (e.g. 2001: 288, 294, 296) on her part led to the co-production of a story showing the 'morally laden nature of one cultural world - that of music teaching' (2001: 297). This finding is described as being 'patently obvious'.

Stepping back, what then would be 'patently obvious' from the conversation analytic account of the researcher's interview with Yv that has been presented in this chapter? The researcher proposes that this is a dynamic in which when the topic of the usefulness of productivity is introduced, supported by the gloss that a 'no' answer is allowable, the discussion moves into Yv's account, which is *co-operatively assisted* by the researcher, of a moral world where people are not seen as items.

This cooperative assistance is evident from near the beginning. In the previous subsection, the researcher has discussed how the topic-initiating question was preceded by discreet talk, alluding to knowledge not known to the recipient. Then, after the initial question did not fairly immediately result in responding talk from Yv, the researcher added the gloss that 'you can say no if you want to' (end of turn 01). This gloss represents the researcher 'offering [his] story', disclosing himself 'as a person, someone who has ideas on this topic' (Rapley 2004: 23).

The disclosure that is being offered is his understanding of his prior analytic work that macro-economic data does not always support the proposition that technical definitions of productivity are relevant, in the commonly understood way, to all sectors of the economy, and in particular not in the sector in which Yv works. The *work* that this disclosure aimed to do was to make clear in the local context that, if the concept of productivity was not something that was used in her work context, Yv should not thereby feel that this was an accountable omission.

Yv's account of why productivity is not useful may therefore be an account in the way that the question-answer sequence, 'Do you ever go to London?' - 'No, we like to go to Spain', constitutes an account of not going to London. The depicted moral world is not so much *about* the usefulness of the concept of productivity, as a description of the moral world into which the concept of productivity must fit, to be useful.

The interview with Yv can then perhaps be seen as a 'clash of perspectives' (Tinggaard 2007: 171) between approaches to 'productivity' and Yv's practical work concerns of 'people as not items', which briefly intersect and then re-diverge.

As a consequence, the topical-content findings given in the previous two sections - the contrast pairs between Yv's work and buying and selling, between performance and productivity, between people and items - may need to be reparsed from being an answer to a research question about the usefulness of productivity, to a depiction of some of the concerns, the moral concerns, that are present and need addressing and are used as guidance to actions in Yv's work context. This reparsing of the interpretative context away from the research context into the context of Yv's world then represents, from the auto-ethnographic perspective, an additional further step in the development of the researcher's *research* subjectivity as he moves from realism towards an increasingly constructionist outlook.

The consideration of these alternative analytic trajectories concludes the conversation analysis, and the researcher now returns, in Chapter 9, to viewing his research programme from the ethnographic perspective and presents the ways in which the findings from the conversation analysis can throw light on the development of the researcher's subjectivity.

## *Chapter 9*

# Development, performativity, discussion and further research

### 9.1 INTRODUCTION

Having in the previous chapter performed a detailed conversation analysis of that part of the interview with Yv during which the topic of productivity was introduced accompanied by a membership categorisation device analysis of some elements identified by the researcher as having topical content, the researcher now returns to the ethnographic thread.

In terms of the ethnographic thread, how do these analyses play into the development of the researcher's subjectivity in respect of the concept of 'productivity'?

To inform this discussion, the researcher takes forward two findings from the analysis. First, the conversation analysis identified a possible parenthetical repair process initiated by Yv (perhaps unconsciously) to return to a prematurely closed topic, which involved the opaque talk 'because it's another ((rustle)) (.8) box:'.

This parenthetical sequence whose intersubjective purpose was to come to a shared understanding of the topic that was under discussion (at this point, essentially Yv's topic), the researcher believes, may have been the reason why the interview never settled in the researcher's mind - the 'strangeness' of it.

The researcher continued to try to understand this parenthetical sequence as a contribution of topical content concerning Yv's view of productivity, while the conversation analysis has suggested that the purpose was not the



communication of content but agreement on what any subsequent ‘content’ would be concerning.

The second finding emerges from the adjoined membership categorisation analysis applied to the talk just preceding the possible parenthetical repair sequence, and the talk that followed on. In the light of the conversation analysis, the membership categorisation devices employed by Yv are interpreted by the researcher as responses to the introduction of the concept of productivity within a constrained context of talk, namely a qualitative research interview.

These responses then constitute the ‘content’ that was available as a resource for the development of a new subjectivity by the researcher in respect of the topic of productivity. The intersubjective strangeness of the encounter was not a ‘content’ resource of this form, but in its persistence became a *motivational resource*.

That is, the researcher was aware on an existential basis that something had occurred during the interview which could not be accounted for by his prior cognitive outlook; there was something *new* in his mind, this newness having originated in the encounter with Yv, probably locatable to that part of the interview concerning presenting Yv with talk around ‘productivity’, and the sensation of strangeness was a motivator to *not discount* this new thing in his future considerations of ‘productivity’ in service sector contexts of the kind, or having similarities with those, with which Yv was familiar.

The next section will then describe in detail how this newness contributed to the development of the researcher’s subjectivity during the post-interview phase. The following section, on research performativity, will explain why in this case this matters, why the experience is of importance, and not simply a curiosity.

This is then followed by a more general discussion around forced topic shifts in interview contexts and areas of possible future research. This thesis does not have a formal conclusion. Due to its nature and being based on essentially a single interview that would be presumptive, and these possible future avenues and some final ethnographic reflections, finishing with a description of the essentially auto-ethnographic contribution that this thesis makes, stand in place of such a formal conclusion.

## 9.2 DEVELOPMENT OF A SUBJECTIVITY

In the aftermath, then, of the interview with Yv, and after the period of deep reflection, the researcher began reading about discourse analysis and the theory of the research interview.

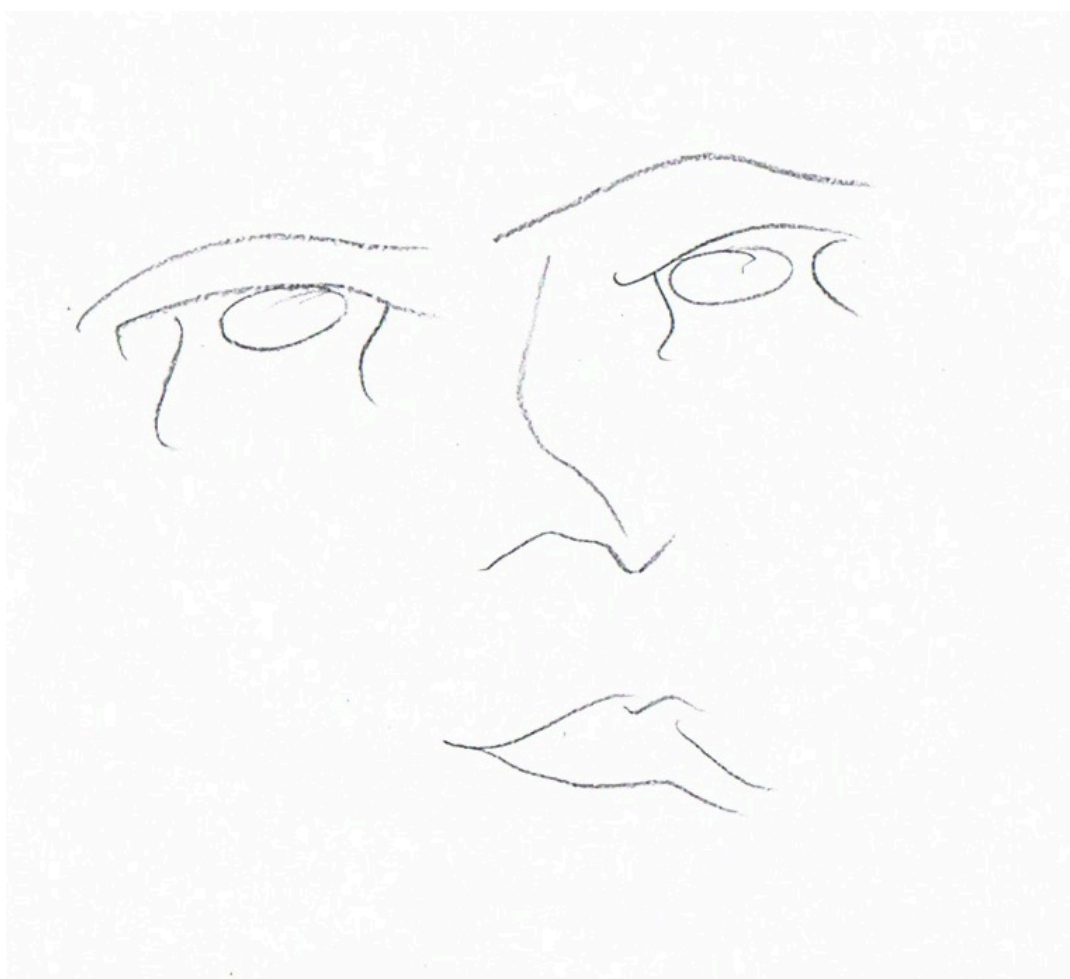
Out of this reading emerged the idea of trying to understand the interview through a detailed comparative analysis with the medical oral exam transcript from Example 1 in Sarangi (2000), because of the noticeable similarities between the interactional troubles that occurred in both interviews. At this stage, though the researcher was aware of Rapley (2001), he had not realised that the three extracts in that paper could be concatenated to form a second potential comparative passage of similar length. This realisation did not indeed come until the researcher was preparing for his viva.

The idea then was to compare the interview with Yv with Example 1 from Sarangi (2000) in order to identify how the interactional troubles might be accounted for and where they might end, and then take the ensuing part of the interview as the substantial topical content that might be taken as Yv's views on productivity. There were flaws in this approach, as has been discussed in Chapter 6, but it represented a practical path by which to gain greater understanding, and was indeed the approach taken right through to viva.

The merit of this analytic approach was that it did encourage the interviewer to look in detail at the interview and *start* considering exactly what had happened, why it had turned out as it did, and which elements of the interview were about managing the local order and which could be taken as perhaps representative of Yv's views.

This then was the researcher's intellectual approach. But at the same time, the researcher experienced the need to address the problem less rationally, and more intuitively. The action that the researcher took in this regard, without really reflecting on it, was to create a drawing of a representation of Yv. This drawing is shown in Figure 2 below.

*Figure 2: Representation of Yv*



This representation was not then a picture of the person who has been called Yv in this thesis, but as the researcher was creating it he conceived of it as an image of his memory and impression of Yv in her guise of talking about productivity in the way she did. That is, it was an externalised personification of how he imagined a person such as Yv might think, informed by the interview talk.

Around such a realised personification or persona, the researcher could coalesce his thoughts, the ones that were new and strange and different from his own pre-interview thoughts, and ascribe them to 'Yv' the persona in his own mind, rather than Yv the person with whom he talked.

In this way, the researcher became aware *at that stage* that these thoughts might not be so much how Yv thought, but rather represented the impact on his own thoughts of the intersubjective experience of the interview combined with such topical content as he could take away from the interview.

In this way, these thoughts and ideas could be protected and held separate, and to a degree came to have an internally articulated life of their own, driven by the motivation, stemming from the interview, of the researcher not being able to let go and settle out such thoughts as had emerged in the wake of the interview around productivity.

This kind of process, centring around the creation of a drawn image, was very much different from the development of the possible hypothesis that the researcher had taken with him into the interview, that the concept of productivity might not be equi-valent in all sectors, and that in some sectors the concept of productivity might not be useful. Such a hypothesis is a take-it-or-leave-it proposition, arrived at by intellectual perception. If subsequently evidence emerged to falsify it, then that would be that.

The patterns of thought surrounding the image shown in Figure 2 had a quite different character. They were emotionally charged, and if certain evidence subsequently emerged of one form or another, this would not be able to gainsay the experience from which this pattern of thinking had emerged.

It is in this way that the researcher sees the process as the emergence and the development of a subjectivity. A subjectivity that has emotional involvement, that has resilience, that has as it were its own personification in his own mind, and that can be summoned like a genii to bring into play not what the researcher thinks intellectually and rationally about productivity, but *what he has learned from Yv* about how to think about productivity.

Within this mix there is indeed some intellectual, rational cognitive *content* that the interviewer 'learnt' in the interview. This was originally derived through the process of comparative analysis against Example 1 from Sarangi (2000) which was briefly described above, but these original results concerning content in their key aspects had a lot in common with those that emerged later from the membership categorisation device analysis presented in the previous chapter of this thesis. The main difference is that the researcher sees the results now as being less about what Yv thinks specifically about productivity, and more as *Yv's facilitated response* to the introduction of the topic of productivity within interview.

Essentially, then, this content is that the researcher sees Yv's response to the topic of productivity as being to communicate a moral order which contrasts her work with the commercial world of buying and selling, and contrasts being 'about people' with thinking in terms of 'items'.

In this context, the researcher's understanding of the word 'item' is a commercial one. An item is an entry on an invoice, which can be taken to

refer to a thing, but is not the thing itself. Thus a telephone bill can be itemised or not itemised, but whether it is one or the other does not affect the fact that a call has been made.

It is the treating of people as *items*, as merely entries on paper or in a computer, that is the issue at question here. In other words, treating what can be described in a computer or on paper as encapsulating everything that a person is, with decisions being made accordingly.

So then to the researcher, the persona or subjectivity of Yv within him then represents this. That in certain situations and contexts, there is a moral order which values this distinction between the real person and their computerised representation; and that he should be wary of an approach that stems from considerations of productivity lest it acts to vitiate this distinction. And in addition, because this has the character of a *subjectivity* within him, it is not amenable to gainsaying simply through disputatious argument.

And so it is in this way that the researcher's particular subjectivity developed as a result of undertaking the interview with Yv. The next section now looks at what effect or impact this new subjectivity has actually had in the researcher's real world, and provides an example of how qualitative research can at a simple level lead to new outlooks and practices, and be *transformative*.

### 9.3 RESEARCH PERFORMATIVITY

The development of this new subjectivity within the researcher's mind came to play an important role in the other contemporaneous strand of his research programme concerning productivity, the quantitative analysis of the EU KLEMS productivity database using linear regression and principal component analysis. So at this point the researcher picks up the story of the quantitative analysis.

As described in Chapter 4 (section 4.6), the researcher had written up the quantitative analysis and submitted a paper to a productivity journal in May 2010.

The researcher received feedback from the productivity journal's anonymous reviewers in February 2011, shortly *after* the researcher had completed his initial analysis of the interview with Yv, the analysis that was included in his original thesis submission, and also *after* the processes involved in the development of the subjectivity described in the previous section had occurred.

The researcher's newly-developed subjectivity towards service sector productivity internally personified by the externalised drawing of Yv was thus available as a *resource* in deciding on a course of action in response to the reviewers' comments. This proved to be important both in deciding on the course of action, which was to resubmit the paper to another journal, and also in pursuing that course of action to a successful conclusion, as the following subsections will show.

### 9.3.1 Responding to reviewers comments 1

Though the editor was more sympathetic, suggesting that the author resubmitted the paper to another journal, the reviewers' comments can be summarised by the following two quotes. In these quotes, RVA refers to 'residual value added' (see David forthcoming), which was the measure of productivity used by the researcher as the main dependent variable in the regression analysis, and was thus central to the paper.

'I do not believe that the dependent variable in the RVA case is correctly measured' (reviewer 1)

'productivity numbers obtained through [the] RVA method are pretty meaningless' (reviewer 2)

Source: email communication from specialist productivity journal dated 14th February 2011

These comments perhaps can be seen to enact Wodak's (2000) methods of monologization (see section 6.3), with in this case transitivity applied through the casting of the reviewers as 'experts' and the researcher/submitter as the non-expert whose views are irrational or 'pretty meaningless' as reviewer 2 has it. From this stance, productivity would then be the 'theme' - 'what is understood as presupposed and not questionable' - and (in general) the 'rheme' or allowed focus for new topical content *should* be 'how productivity can be improved'.

How then was the researcher to interpret these comments, given that they accorded no sense, let alone a contribution, to the paper, and what action should he take?

It was at this point that the researcher's new subjectivity became decisive. In as much as this journal specialised in productivity, and in as much as macro-level productivity analysis specialises in the analysis of systems of national accounts (of which the EU KLEMS database is an example), it may be said that the reviewers concerns, horizons and focus were on the analysis of entries into accounts, or accounting *items*.

Immediately, this leads into Yv's contrast pairs, a crucial facet of the new subjectivity, which capture the idea that in some way or another an outlook based on items (rather than people) falls short. This then opened up a space or distance for perspective, a way of looking at the reviewers' comments which did not have to accept the basis of their viewpoint, even though they were recognised experts on productivity.

This counter-point rested on the view of Yv (as a personification of the researcher's subjectivity) that people may mis-take people for items, and the important emotional, rather than rational, understanding that the



significance and impact of this mis-take should not be underestimated. That is, this point should not be easily given up *even if* argument or sophistry takes the researcher to a position where there is no other obvious *rational* alternative but to relinquish it.

The emotional aspect here is one of increased resilience and determination in thinking of alternative response strategies that do not start from accepting academic terms of debate which seem to have implicit in them assumptions of which the researcher himself is uncertain, even if the counter-parties display confidence in their certainty.

So then the researcher saw that a way of obviating the basis of the assertion that RVA is meaningless was not to engage in rational argument with this audience, but to find another audience whose viewpoint was not built up from the same starting point. That is, an audience that was less likely to *discount* the difference between people-as-they-live-their-lives and the computerised-records-that-record-these-lives, as they exist within systems of national accounts; an audience for whom the importance and relevance of the complexities of the intersubjective interactions present in some service encounters, for example, might be a strong non-discountable cognitive reality in their day-to-day thinking.

Based on this insight, the researcher decided the appropriate action was to take the editor's advice, and resubmit the paper, but this time to a journal specialising in service sector management. Accordingly, this is what the researcher did, rewriting the paper so that it featured a triangulation, based on the paper's analysis of economic data, of Shafti et al.'s (2007) more discursive interview-based approach to service industry classification and submitting it to The Service Industries Journal in March 2011.

The researcher then returned to completing his thesis for first submission in August 2011. Comments back from The Service Industries Journal were

not to arrive until mid-July 2011, by which time the researcher had virtually completed his thesis and was involved in its final edit and review.

### 9.3.2 Responding to reviewers comments 2

The comments from the experts in service sector management on the researcher's analysis of the EU KLEMS productivity database, when they came, were extensive, but quite different in nature from the comments that had been made by the experts in productivity. The paper was described as 'interesting' by one reviewer and the other perceived that it 'could contribute to the field of quantitative service classification by using economic data'. Each, though, raised a number of concerns.

Many of these concerns were of a technical nature around the method of analysis, but two are relevant here.

Firstly, one reviewer questioned the use of RVA, and asked for further justification for its selection as the measure of choice, with more consideration of the 'pros and cons'. The other reviewer considered that the literature review should be updated and extended, naming one paper in particular (Johnston and Jones 2004) that should be included.

Certainly, the researcher's natural reaction to the first comment concerning RVA would have been to embark on more extensive technical consideration of the measure in comparison with other possible measures of productivity. But now, in view of his developed subjectivity, an alternative avenue presented itself. Rather than further *technical* justification, the justification that the researcher proposed in his response was on the basis of improved communication, thus:

In the interests of reaching a varied audience and because in some areas the application of the concept of productivity is itself contested (e.g. Rego, Godinho, McQueen, & Cunha, 2010), the paper applies a relatively neutral name, residual value added (RVA), to the central

dependent variable in the least squares analysis (from researcher's response to reviewers' comments on paper submitted to The Service Industries Journal).

The advantage of a response positioned in this way, as being about communication, was that it did in fact capture the reason why the researcher had used RVA rather than a more traditional measure of productivity. It had seemed to him, when originally planning the analysis, that to start with a measure defined using a traditional approach would have meant almost ceding the argument about the relevance of productivity before it was even underway. From there on in, it would have always been an uphill struggle to communicate effectively with an audience that included people whose views on productivity might be more sceptical.

The views of this possibly more sceptical part of the audience could well be, as the researcher saw it now, more in line with his understanding of Yv's depiction of a moral world that contrasts people with items, as encapsulated in his newly developed subjectivity. And so this new subjectivity, and the motivational perspectives it brought within the researcher's purview, were authentically relevant to decisions about the original purposes of, and positions taken by the researcher during, the quantitative analysis.

It was the immediacy of the experience of the interview with Yv and the subsequently developed subjectivity, its emotional presence, that gave the argument around communication weight within the researcher's mind, and allowed the balance of judgement of the best type of response to the reviewer's concern to shift from a technical defence to one based on improving communication with a potential audience that might include varied attitudes towards productivity. The new subjectivity gave the researcher the confidence to defend his original decision using reasoning authentic to the basis of that decision.

The second concern mentioned above, around updating the literature review, is also of interest. The researcher had avoided going into too much detail in the paper on more recent research on service sector productivity, because it had not been clear to him how within the length constraints of a paper he would be able to represent it in a balanced way. The reviewer's comment, though, forced the issue and the researcher had to say something, particularly on Johnston and Jones (2004).

Referring back to the start of the second literature review chapter in this thesis, Chapter 3, Johnston and Jones comment that at that time there was relatively little published empirical research into service productivity (Johnston and Jones 2004: 201). But on re-reading the paper, the researcher also noticed that the authors refer to the complexity of productivity in a service sector context.

At this point, a couple of things fell into place. Firstly, the researcher saw that complexity was the underlying theme of the rather solid mass of recent literature on the training and education context in the service sectors under study that the researcher read in preparation for interviewing, and which was presented towards the end of Chapter 5.

Secondly, the researcher felt the impact of the larger message of the interview with Yv, around the discussions concerning building trust between client and staff member, and extending this trust to trust in the organisation, and then further extending this envelope of trust to take in recipient organisations to whom the client might get referred, and how training was designed with building this spider web of trust in mind. These ideas, wrapped up with the researcher's newly developed subjectivity, brought home and reinforced the centrality of the issue of complexity around improving performance in such contexts.

The researcher's response, then, was to update the paper's literature review by drawing forward Johnston and Jones's (2004) line on complexity, and illustrating this line with discussion of a number of different strands of research into the underlying complexity supported by examples drawn from later publications, a response that was found acceptable.

So again, the researcher's developed subjectivity allowed him to formulate a response to the reviewer's comment that reflected how he thought, in a way that would not have been so easy to believe in and say with conviction, prior to this new subjectivity having been developed.

### 9.3.3 Summary of research performativity

This then, in the researcher's view, substantiates the claim made in the introduction to this thesis that this research would fall under the 'praxis/ social change' purpose of research (Cho and Trent 2006: 332) in which the 'researcher should openly express how his or her own subjectivity has progressively been challenged and thus transformed as he or she collaboratively interacts with his or her participants' (2006: 332).

Furthermore, in that this research has contributed to the eventual publication of a piece of research challenging the accepted notions of productivity, it has fulfilled the requirement for qualitative research of being *performative*, or having an impact or effecting an action, suggested by both Cho and Trent (2006) and Denzin (2009).

The publication of the paper discussed in this section also discharges what the researcher perceived as his ethical duty towards Yv, namely to try and fulfil the implicit understanding involved in her agreeing to participate that the views that she might express during the research should be to the best of the researcher's ability represented to a wider audience, rather than (say) ignored or discounted.

## 9.4 DISCUSSION AND FURTHER RESEARCH

There are a couple of points that might warrant further comment, one concerning the possible nature of interactional troubles in interviews, and secondly some final auto-ethnographic reflections looking back on the qualitative aspects of the research programme as a whole.

### 9.4.1 Forced shifts in topic

Firstly it was noted in the consideration of whether the post-51st minute passage in the interview with Yv, the passage during which the topic of productivity was discussed, could be considered as containing interactional troubles, that the interview and the two comparative excerpts that were used as a resource, Extracts 2, 3 and 1b from Rapley (2001) and Example 1 from Sarangi (2000), might all be examples of 'markedly forced shifts in topic' (ten Have 2007: 190).

Within the interview there was a sequence of talk which was identified as a correction-invitation device of a particular form. The particular form was that of a series of candidate understandings separated by possible transition-relevance places. This sequence was made up of Yv's turns 04 and 06, with the intervening researcher's turn being the positive relevance-acknowledgement token 'yeah'.

Now it is noticeable that similarly constructed sequences of talk, with multiple candidate understandings separated by possible transition-relevance places with the co-participant not taking up the transitions through any utterances apart from one continuer (also interpretable as a topic-shifter which might indicate a possible negative assessment of the relevance of talk), occur in both Rapley (lines 14 to 30 in Extract 3, Rapley 2001: 313) and Sarangi (turn S04 as shown in Appendix 3). These occur at a broadly similar sequence-point in relation to the topic-initiating question in the three examples.

It was also observed that ten Have considers that multiple turn-constructional units may be a more common characteristic of institutional contexts with pre-allocation of turns, for example where the identities of questioner and answerer are consistently taken by particular participants (ten Have 2007: 177 & 183) as is the case in interviews.

Another commonality between the three passages may be that the new topic requires an answer based on different knowledge bases or methods of reasoning than previous talk. So that in the Rapley (2001) extracts, it appears the trajectory is towards the giving of a confidence; in the Sarangi (2000) example, the candidate is expected to give an assessment of his own personality, rather than an answer based on the medical research literature; and in the interview with Yv, while previous answers have been based on Yv's knowledge of how her work context and other similar work contexts operate, answers concerning productivity cannot, in the researcher's estimation, be based on the same knowledge as his understanding is that the concept of productivity is not, to the knowledge of Yv, used and therefore does not arise in work contexts or conversations.

They are all thus forms of a potential 'situational trap' (Sarangi 2000: 10), in which talk under the new topic may be assessed, and the respondent held accountable, in a rather different way from the previous topics. The respondent in each case therefore needs to be wary, before engaging with talk on the new topic, that they do not thereby put themselves in a false position. They need to be sure that they are not mistaken in assuming there is a new means of accountability agreed, lest they put forward talk *assuming* the new means of accountability and find that they are held to account using the pre-existing accountability system.

Such requests for accounts using the pre-existing basis might, variously, be the examiner asking the candidate to cite scientific references concerning the importance of personality, or the questioner in the Rapley example

perhaps asking the respondent to compare his/her confidence with others' behaviour and behavioural norms, or the researcher asking Yv to recall a particular conversation or context at work that further illustrated a statement she might make concerning productivity.

Drawing these features together, is it possible that topic changes within interviews become more forced when not only is there not a natural entry into the new topic based on the previous talk, but the nature of the new topic requires an answer based on different stocks of knowledge or methods of reasoning than previous topics?

And in addition, where such problems of understanding within an interview caused by the introduction of a new topic occur, is it possible that it is easier for the answerer to initiate repair through the presentation of a *series* of candidate understandings than it would be in normal conversation, if the institutional context is one (such as interviews) where constraints on identities promote the more common use of multiple turn-constructual units and so reduce the risk of premature loss of turn?

These three examples might then form the beginnings of a *collection* (Sidnell 2010: 31-34) - an incipient collection of examples of repair initiation through the offering of multiple candidate understandings by the answerer in the context of forced topic switches within interviews where the topic switch is associated with a switch in the 'stocks of knowledge' (Holstein and Gubrium 2003: 77 from Schutz 1967) or methods of reasoning on which an answer is expected to draw.

It would thus be a collection not so much of repairs in understanding, but of repairs in the relevant evidential base selection or *epistemic grounds* of offered talk (Sidnell 2010: 184) - how *in this case, for this topic* should the answerer be demonstrating how s/he knows what s/he knows.



That epistemic grounds are everywhere a relevant consideration for the production of talk in interviews can be seen from Rapley (2004: 28). Rapley gives an extract from an interview in which the respondent Ben answers 'Yes of course it is' to a question about whether the construction industry is institutionally sexist. To this, the interviewer responds 'You say of course, can you tell me why you would say of course then?' Rapley's comment on this is that the respondent then produces himself as a person whose 'entitlement to speak with authority' on this issue 'is based on his "ethnographic" experience of the day-to-day activities on building sites'.

This illustrates the situation always pertaining in research interviews, that is inherent in its question-answer format. The questioner may at any time question the epistemic grounds of any talk made by the answerer, and this in a context where techniques that allude to the knowledge differential in favour of the interviewer may be routinely deployed by the interviewer (Rapley and Antaki 1998). It therefore behoves the respondent to pay attention to the valid epistemic grounds in play at each point. Specifically, as a consequence, if the topic is one which constitutes esoteric knowledge, and the respondent is not a member of the relevant esoteric group, it is not clear (to the researcher at least) on what 'valid' epistemic grounds, if any, talk may be offered by the respondent.

The researcher puts forward these questions rather hesitantly, as it is quite possible that the ultimate cause of many of the interactional troubles that arose during his interview with Yv might well be the researcher's relative inexperience of qualitative research. This recognition, and reflections on it, form the final topic of this thesis.

#### 9.4.2 Final auto-ethnographic reflections

Reflecting over the whole course of this research, the researcher is drawn to the conclusion that his approach may have been too logical, too literal, too direct, and that he tried to reach his goal too fast. It is not always wise

to attempt the steepest ascent, even if it looks the shortest, and a more circuitous route following more closely the gradients of the things that people are accustomed to do and the topics that people want to talk about might have proved more effective.

Directly introducing the topic of productivity within the research interview with Yv coincided with an extended sequence of interactional troubles, during which Yv used the word 'productivity' three times as a single word, once in a phrase with the modifier 'not', and never in a clause or sentence.

This lack of evidence of a facility to demonstrate accountable knowledge of the use of 'productivity' within a work context accords with Kilic and Okumus's experiences in discursively investigating the use of productivity with actors engaged in actual work practices in the hotel industry, where senior managers 'seemed to have limited or superficial knowledge on productivity management and its measurement' (2005: 322).

An alternative approach, for example, of a qualitative enquiry into the benefits of and approaches to training and education in the sectors of interest might have created an extensive, rich set of materials, through which the impact of the technical aspects of productivity on decision-making might have proved discernible, either directly or indirectly through techniques such as discourse analysis. The more literal route that the researcher chose was not effective, because it failed to yield an uncontested set of materials on which such an analysis could be robustly based.

Another indirect approach that might also be useful more widely is to plan the research design of qualitative enquiry so that the analysis can pick up some of the wider 'social, cultural, or historical' (Rapley 2012: 551) contexts within which the discursal exchanges within interviews occur.

This would include analytic consideration, first, of the local moral order that it seems is inevitably co-produced within interviews, but often in ways that may be incidental and difficult to anticipate. The depiction of these moral orders may be 'patently obvious' but yet may be lost in the analysis and presentation of research because of the tangential relation to the focused research questions (Roulston 2001, also Rapley 2012: 551). Conversation analysis may also be used to help distinguish those elements of interviews that are topical-content related and those that are performing some other conversational action or function, as argued by Rapley (2004: 16) and as shown in this thesis.

The second wider context is then those aspects which may be accessible through approaches stemming from critical discourse analysis (e.g. Wodak 2000) which more explicitly try and situate the content of texts within discourses along 'historical, political, sociological and/or psychological dimensions in the analysis and interpretation of a specific discursive occasion' (2000: 188).

This might also help the analysis of topics that may not be directly discursively accessible to particular groups, such as the example of 'esoteric knowledge' touched on above. If the technical aspects of productivity are counted as 'esoteric knowledge', then the suggested analysis in terms of Wodak's (2000) exposition of transitivity of the productivity journal reviewers' comments, given in subsection 9.3.1 (above), might be considered an application of this approach.

The third 'wider context' component of interview-based research is the connection to more naturalistic settings, a connection that may not always be clear (Rapley 2012: 551). The combination of interviewing approaches with other approaches such as, as Rapley suggests, observation or in the case presented here the analysis of non-discursive economic data, can seek to address this connection. The explication of members' decision-

making is an important concern for social science, in that decisions can affect and indeed construct the future, and a particular consideration that might be of interest here is how (and if) the local moral orders that emerge within research interviews are used in actual practical decision making in participants' worlds.

This thesis has also shown how interviewing itself can make a uniquely valuable contribution along the lines envisaged by Cho and Trent (2006), by complementing and adding to other perhaps less involving approaches through its inherently concentrated, interactive, transformational character and the consequent impact on the researcher's own subjectivity or subjectivities.

The final, more specific reflection is that the particular contribution of this thesis is to present an auto-ethnographic, reflective case study of using conversation analysis to investigate a 'puzzling interaction' (Roulston 2011: 93) in order to develop a 'mindful consideration of one's role in the generation of data for research purposes' (2011: 92); and in so doing the thesis accomplishes the re-visiting and re-analysis of already existing data to generate an alternative reading that constitutes a 'rich[er], [more] adequately theorized account' of the research topic (Roulston 2001: 298).

In this case, indeed, the re-analysis led to a *diametrically opposed* interpretation of a key section of Yv's talk. In the original analysis, the talk in question concerning productivity was taken naively as a personal statement by Yv, as described in section 6.4. In the richer account presented in this thesis, the researcher has argued that in fact Yv *resisted* the researcher's initiation of the new topic that would have been about Yv's personal reaction to the concept of productivity, and as a consequence the talk may well be better interpreted as the depiction of a moral world of work, into which the concept of productivity - to be useful - best needs fit.

From this perspective, the thesis then should be taken not as a demonstration of competence in the field of conversation analysis per se, but as a demonstration of the reflective capacity of the researcher to describe adequately how the qualitative research process may require the occasional unplanned deployment of research tools, specifically here conversation analysis, in order to address a particular research issue or problem as it may arise. Such a description may then serve, so the researcher hopes, as a useful explication of this process; and which will be available as a resource for other researchers in the future who may find themselves in a similar position.

# Appendix 1: Examples and categorisation of practical research relevant to training and education in the sectors under study

This search is based on looking at abstract for papers 2005-2010 for Journal of Education and Work, The Service Industries Journal, the Journal of European Industrial Training and the Industrial and Commercial Training Journal. The latter is not peer reviewed.

Total (possibly) relevant papers downloaded: 39

## A1.1 ANALYSIS ACCORDING TO WHETHER PRODUCTIVITY OR PRODUCTIVE IS MENTIONED

### A1.1.1 Paper is not about specific research in a practical context (4 papers)

(e.g. policy related, or future related)

Coulson-Thomas (2010) This short paper argues for using 'medical learning and support tools' to increase healthcare productivity. It does not contain specific practical research.

Djellal and Gallouj (2006) This paper is a general review of innovation in care services for the elderly.

Karseth and Nerland (2007) Discourse analysis of Norwegian professional association policy documents.

Pratten and Lovatt (2005) This paper is a review of concerns around alcohol abuse, and the need for more professional training for licensees.

### A1.1.2 Productivity/productive not mentioned (15)

Ekinci and Dawes (2009)

Espino-rodriguez and Robaina (2005)

Heggen (2008)

Kuo (2007)

Li *et al.* (2009)

Phillips (2007)

Pratten (2007)

Pratten and O'Leary (2007)

Purcell and Milner (2005)

Sambrook (2006)

Smeby and Vagan (2008)

Storr and Trenchard (2010)

Wilton (2006)

Wiredu (2007)

Yang (2009)

*A1.1.3 Productivity/productive only appears with a general usage (5)*

e.g. 'counter-productive', 'productive activities', 'productive future associations', 'productive investment'

Collin *et al.* (2010)

Laing *et al.* (2005)

Meads *et al.* (2009)

Nilsson *et al.* (2005)

Tsai (2009)

A1.1.4 Productivity/productive only appears in bibliography (4)

Beatson *et al.* (2008)

McCabe and Garavan (2008)

Soltani *et al.* (2009)

Soriano (2005)

A1.1.5 Productivity/productive appears only in introduction or literature review in the main text (7)

Altinay *et al.* (2008)

Constanti and Gibbs (2005)

Hsieh and Yen (2005)

Morgan *et al.* (2008)

Nolan *et al.* (2010)

Soltani *et al.* (2008)

Tseng *et al.* (2008)

A1.1.6 Productivity/productive appears only in conclusion in the main text (1)

Rego *et al.* (2010) – the emphasis on productivity mentioned as one cause of the ‘MacDonaldizing’ of health-related services (2010:1434)

A1.1.7 Productivity/productive appears only in discussion in the main text (1)

Kuo (2009) – Increasing productivity is mentioned as a possible benefit of improving motivation (2009:1212)

A1.1.8 Productivity/productive appears in introduction/literature review or discussion/conclusion in the main text, but not in sections concerned with the specific research in the practical context

None found.



*A1.1.9 Productivity/productive appears in the sections concerned with the specific research in the practical context (2)*

Altinay and Altinay (2006) Productivity is mentioned twice in a general way during the operationalisation of concepts. The ability to communicate in English is considered to have an impact on productivity (2006: 207) and incentives are thought to be able to increase productivity (2006: 210). The former variable is found to have a significant statistical relationship with business growth.

Claver-Cortes *et al.* (2009) Productivity appears in the literature review and in the conclusion (against the same reference, Brown and Dev 1999). 'Productive' also appears in the findings (2009: 952) thus:

This is probably due to the economies of scope, scale, and experience likely to derive from the size of the hotel, and materialises in a lower need of employees per room, since employees become more productive.

## Appendix 2: Conversation analysis annotation conventions used

The conversation analysis annotations that have been used, based on Rapley (2007: 59-60), in turn adapted from Jefferson (2004), are:

(.)	A noticeable pause
(.4)	A longer pause, of e.g. 0.4 seconds
underline	Emphasis
:	Extension of sound
::	Longer extension of sound
[	Identifies overlapping speech, used in pairs to mark both overlapping elements. Rapley uses the left square bracket, '['. The vertical bar, ' ', is used by Sarangi (2000) and in Appendix 3 for consistency with Sarangi.
< >	Words between are delivered at a slower pace
◦ ◦	Words between are quieter than surrounding talk
h	Outbreath
.h	Inbreath
(( ))	Words in double brackets indicate researcher's descriptions. Sarangi (2000) uses single square brackets.

### Additions to Rapley (2007) – various sources

↑	Emphasis through intonation
.pt	Slight lipsmack
,	Sentence continuing intonation
-	Replacement for normal punctuation such as full stop and comma. Used for readability
=	latching together of words

Note: no capitalisation is used at the start of a sentence

## Appendix 3: Comparison of interview with Yv with Example 1 in Sarangi

*Table showing excerpts comparing Yv's interview after the 51st minute turn-by-turn with Example 1 from Sarangi (2000) (longer turns are abridged)*

Tm	Spk	Research interview talk	Tm	Spk	Sarangi Example 1 talk
D01	R:	umm (.) so I've got - I'll kind of (.) move on (.) . . . ((ftwc 62))	S01	E:	ok how does personality affect one's work as a doctor – the doctor's personality
D02	Y:	.pt <productivity> (2) umm:: it's	S02	C:	[sighs and long pause] ok [pause] well personality . . . ((ftwc 32))
D03	R:	do you ever have discussions in the organization about (.) productivity?	S03	E:	erm your thoughts on it – not necessarily literature
D04	Y:	(.) <again> its:h in terms of training (.6) . . . ((ftwc 28))	S04	C:	ok personality affects [laughs] how many (...) patients you have [S04 continues below]
D05	R:	yeah			
D06	Y:	exit (.8) what we do in between that is outcomes . . . ((ftwc 44))	S04		[S04 continues] . . . ((ftwc 119))
D07 R: to D09		right so that so those (.2) so the, ((Yv coughs)) retention the: the success: (1.0) do you describe those as productivity?	S05	E:	what about your own er personality – do you think that's ideally suited for for general practice
D10	Y:	hm:	S06	C:	well of course that's why I chose general practice
D11	R:	when you're talking about them in the organization (.) . . . ((ftwc 21))	S07	E:	good
D12	Y:	no	S08	C:	general practice er er
D13	R:	no ok so you're just saying – well (.) I've said productivity - that's the closest to,	S09	E:	good what what are the features of your personality that you think that suits general practice
D14	Y:	<yeah>	S10	C:	(.) it's very difficult for somebody to praise himself . . . ((ftwc 24))
D15	R:	ok ↑that's fine ↑that's fine .hhh umm (.5) so . . . ((ftwc 29))	S11	E:	yes
D16	Y:	no   no	S12	C:	and that's what I am going to do
D17	R:	↑that's: that's fine n ow	S13	E:	good
D18	Y:	because we're not selling and buying	S14	C:	I am a highly qualified person – I have postgraduate qualifications apart from the medical degree   I am

D19	R:	yeah yeah yeah yeeah - so (.) so you personally . . . ((ftwc 55))	S15	E:	ok just just just the personality factor
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Source: Columns 1 to 3: interview transcript with conversation analysis annotations from Appendix 2; columns 4 to 6: Sarangi (2000: 8), excerpt from Example 1.

Key: trn = turn, spk = speaker, R = researcher, Y = Yv, E = examiner, C = candidate

Abridged talk is indicated by . . . ((ftwc xx)), with ftwc standing for 'full turn word count'

Talk in the turns with a word count of around 20 or more in the table below has been abridged. Please refer to Excerpt 4 (section 8.1) for the full research interview talk, and Sarangi (2000) for the full Sarangi Example 1 talk.

In the table, turns starting D refer to turns in the research interview, those beginning S refer to turns in the excerpt from Sarangi.

A number of adjustments have been made during the conversion to ease the process of structural comparison. Turn 08 consisting of Yv coughing is included with turns 07 and 09 together to match up against turn S05.

Turn S04, a very long turn, is placed against turns D04, D05 and D06. This is because: its length is considerable compared to these other turns taken individually; in content terms turn D04 continues into D06; and thirdly in the original transcript, turn D05 was not included at all. That is, when listening to it without very exact concentration, the 'yeah' in turn D05 is barely noticeable in the flow of D04 into D06.

Note that in turn S11, this is as Sarangi (2000: 8), who does not have a ']' (vertical bar) at the start of this turn though one might be expected to match that in front of the word 'answer' which comes at the end of the previous turn (not shown in the abridged version above).

The font size in the table is reduced for space reasons.

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