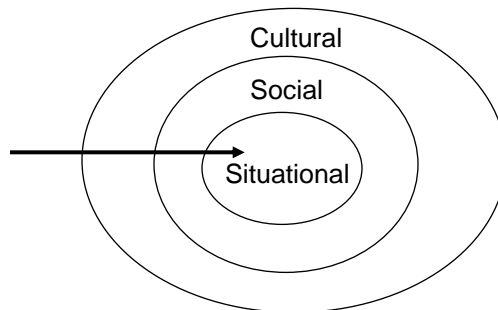


SPHSC 308
Winter 2010
Professor Olswang
Situational Context



Context

- Situational
- Interpersonal/social
- Cultural



Situational Context

- Immediate context influences communication
 - Setting/place (home, school, play field, theater, etc.)
 - Activity (lecture, discussion, free play, pair-share, party, etc.)
 - Environment (materials, light, noise, furniture, temperature, number of people, etc.)

Why is this important?

- Share – Pair activity to illustrate how situational context can influence communication
- You will work in pairs to create examples that would illustrate how situational context can influence communication

Situational Context - Setting

- Setting (home, classroom, coffee shop, library, mall, etc.)
- Come up with two examples to illustrate how setting might influence communication:
 - What are the two settings?
 - How might communication differ between the two.

Situational Context - Activity

- Activities (discussion group, conflict resolution, debate, cooperation, etc.)
- Come up with two examples to illustrate the way activities might influence communication:
 - What are the two activities?
 - How might communication differ between the two.

Situational Context - Environment

- Environment (materials, light, noise, furniture, temperature, number of people, etc.)
- Come up with two examples to illustrate the way different environmental factors might influence communication:
 - What are the two factors?
 - How might communication be influenced by them.



Consider this scenario:

5th Grade Classroom – The children have just left the room for recess, all but one who is tidying her desk.

Mr. Coggins, the teacher, asks Lesley, his favorite student, to give an important message to another student, GERALYN. "Please tell GERALYN to come in a little early from recess".

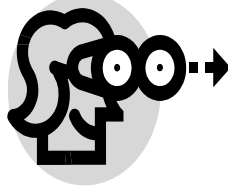


Out the door goes Lesley.

Lesley sees Geralyn across the playground sitting on a bench talking with her friend Lisen. They are whispering, looking around only occasionally.

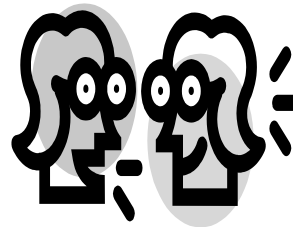


All of a sudden, Lisen covers her eyes; Geralyn pats her on the shoulder. They continue to talk quietly.



Lesley – waits and watches for a few moments, and then approaches slowly, hoping one of the girls will look up.

Indeed, Geralyn does, and Lesley catches her eye. Lesley says “Excuse me Geralyn, but Mr. Coggins wanted me to tell you to come in a little early from recess. Sorry to disturb you guys.”



How does context influence communication?

- What is the setting, activity, environment?
- What did Lesley have to figure out?
- What did she do?

Situational Context - SPHSC

In SPHSC, when assessing individuals with communication problems a good professional always must consider how the situational context might influence performance (for the positive or the negative).

Examples?

How do you appraise situational context?

- Qualitative (vs. quantitative) “Research” Approach
Data collection methodology with the following assumptions:
 - No hypothesis
 - Human behavior is viewed in context – understanding behavior is based on how humans interact
 - Unstructured or loosely structured data collection- objective and subjective data, performance in context
 - Experimenter/Scientist—”Participant Observer”
 - Ethnography and Phenomenology
 - Example:

- Quantitative
 - Hypothesis testing
 - Elements (or variables) of a question can be isolated, measured, observed, and manipulated
 - Prestructured instrumentation-objective, countable data
 - Experimenter/Scientist: objective, attempting to avoid bias
 - Statistical analysis
 - Examples:

WHY Qualitative Research to Study Communication in Context

- Individual can NOT be separated from context (situational, social, cultural)
- Behaviors are part of the context; understanding behaviors can only be done if they are viewed as part of the context

Qualitative Tools and Methods

- ***Observation** – Field Notes (primary method of Ethnography)
- ***Interviews** (primary method of Phenomenology)
- Photographs
- Logs/Journals/Diaries
- Records

* Focus of this class



Ethnography

- Ethnography – Observation of behaviors in context
 - Field methods, naturalistic methods
 - Outsider's perspective
 - Observation, taking into consideration objective and subjective information (“observing everything”)
 - Primary method for Situational Context
 - Appropriate as well for Cultural Context and Social Context, but not to the same degree
 - Interpretation of the data by trying to explain behaviors in relationship to situational context

Phenomenology

- Phenomenology - interview
 - Deep understanding of individual and relationships – particularly in regard to a specific phenomenon
 - Insider's perspective - interview
 - Sense of empathy – “seeing through another's eyes” (Tuesdays with Morrie)
 - Ideally suited for examining Social Context (Relationships) and cultural context
- **For now – we will hold off on phenomenology/interview discussion until we get to the topic of Social Context

Reading - Ethnography

- **Stone-Goldman & Olswang (2003),
Learning to look, learning to see.**

This article reviews the elements of ethnography/observation:

- **Participant Observer**
- **Thick Description**
- **Interpretation**
- **Conclusions**

Stone-Goldman & Olswang Discussion Questions

- Based on the article, what did you learn about each of the elements?
- What stood out for you from this article?
- Based on this article, what might be different from the way you have thought about observation?
- How did we approach the topic of culture in this article?

Observation

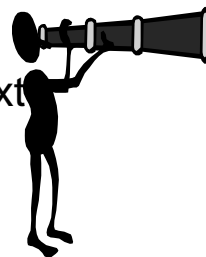
Major Elements

- Participant Observer
- Field Notes, Thick Description > Reflection
- Interpretation
- Conclusions

Observation

Participant Observer

- You, as observer, are part of the context, whether or not you are directly or indirectly involved
- Participant's perspective
- You become part of the context
 - the trick is being unobtrusive



Observation

Field Notes for the “Thick Description”

You’ll come with a question and observe as follows:

- **OBJECTIVE** observation, description, notation of details re. setting, participants, participants’ behaviors, materials, activities
 - What you see and hear, “mundane” as well as “stand outs”
 - Include a diagram
- **SUBJECTIVE** “on-line” observation-BRACKET of what you or others are thinking or feeling

Observation-Thick Description - Example

Question: How does Bobby interact with others during snack time?

Diagram of environment

Bobby sat at the table with his friends [he looked comfortable]. A snack was distributed. He spontaneously asked for “more” and ate the food [he seemed quite hungry]. The other children ate, and talked amongst themselves. Bobby continued to eat and talked to no one [he seemed lonely].

Observation-Thick Description - Example

Question: How does Mr. Smith communicate with his son during visits?

Diagram of environment

Mr. Smith sat in a large recliner looking at the TV. A Soap Opera was on. Tom, Mr. Smith's son, entered the room. He said "Hi Dad." Mr. Smith did not respond; he looked at the TV. [He almost seemed to not hear Tom]. Tom asked, "How are you doing today Pops"? Mr. Smith did not respond; he looked at the TV, and then looked down at his hands. Tom turned off the TV and repeated "How are you doing today?" Mr. Smith looked up at Tom and said "Good". [I think I might have seen a little smile on Mr. Smith's face].

Tom said, "hey, want to look at these photos" – pointing to a photo album on the table. Mr. Smith said, "I would". Tom opened the book, pointed to pictures. Mr. Smith named two or three people, both on his own and in answer to Tom's query. [Mr. Smith seemed very happy]. Tom asked his father what he had for lunch. Mr. Smith smiled, and said, "meat". Tom asked what kind of meat; Mr. Smith smiled and gestured towards the kitchen. [Mr. Smith seemed to be searching for the word]. Mr. Smith said, "I liked it" and laughed.

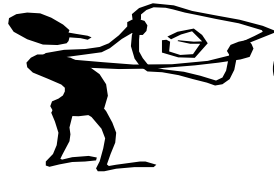
Observation-Reflection (following the Field Notes)

- Immediately following taking notes, take time to reflect on what you observed
- Reflection Notes – Your overall impression
 - Your views about what you saw, and what you might have missed
 - Your concerns, if any
- This step may assist with the interpretation section that is to follow

Observation-Reflection Examples

Reflections on Bobby – what comes to your mind?

Reflections on Mr. Smith – what comes to your mind?



Observation

Interpretation—based on your thick description, you are identifying:

- Recurring themes or patterns in behaviors
- How behaviors arrange themselves into important variables that address your observational question

Observation – Interpretation

- Revisit your initial question
- Make lists of behaviors that might “hang together” and relate to your question
 - Environmental
 - Verbal
 - Nonverbal
- Look for repetitions of behaviors and “standouts” in each of the categories
- You’re looking for patterns

Observation - Interpretation

Example:

What is Mr. Smith's communication like?

Observation in the home with son, living room.

Typical visit, TV on at times, photographs around the room, photo album and magazines on the table

Observation – Interpretation Example

<u>Environ.- Situational Context</u>	<u>Verbal</u>	<u>Nonverbal</u>
TV on	Nothing	Staring
Photo Album, Magazines	Some Naming – when asked and on his own	Looking at pictures, smiling, laughing
Sitting Quietly with son	Answers some questions with single words or simple sentences, on topic. Word finding	Looking at others, smiling, some laughing, gesturing

Observation – Interpretation Example

What is Mr. Smith's communication like?

Mr. Smith doesn't talk when the TV is on.

He does use single words to name pictures when a photo album is placed before him. He uses single words and simple sentences when interacting with son. Sometimes can't find the word.

Observation



Conclusion

- Summary of patterns/themes
- Brings together the observation
- Thick description leads to interpretation, which leads to conclusions
- Conclusions explain the influence of situational context on behaviors and address your question
- Verify that your interpretations “ring true”—go back to sources if possible

Observation – Conclusions Example

Mr. Smith is capable of communicating in single words and simple sentences. He can carry on a brief conversation, staying on topic, answering questions, but seldom initiating. He demonstrates these skills when other stimuli (distractions) are held to a minimum. He seems to enjoy conversing with his son.

Ethnographic Observation

Summary:

Opportunity to look at behavior in context.
To interpret patterns and draw conclusions.

Outsider's view

Observation

- Strengths



- Become part of the data
- “Feel” the situation—make reader feel as though he/she is there
- Depth and breadth of behavior
- Recognition of context as it influences behavior and the phenomenon of interest

Observation

- Challenges



- Controlling biases; keeping objective and subjective data separate
- Noticing important behaviors, contextual variables
- Verifying interpretations and conclusions

Observation

- Ideal for examining communication in context
- Ideal for exploring situational context (and to some extent social and cultural context)
- Observation is the primary method we will use in this class

Experiential Learning Activity #1