

JEFFERSON as REVIEWER

To: William Bright
From: Gail Jefferson

Re: "Response Cries"
Recommend: Publication with deletion and revision

Recommendation to publish is based on what I take to be the procedural argument of the paper (that by means of observation and detailed study of, not only a behavior but its environment, one can discover features of the behavior which are not in the first place intuitively available -- indeed, may be counterintuitive), and on what I take to be the major business of the paper, the presentation of a discovery made by means of such a procedure; that behaviors which are generally conceived of as asocial and/or incompetent (i.e., as 'delicts') are orderly and social-situationally functional. A class of behaviors is isolated -- recognizable responses to impinging circumstances. These behaviors, far from instancing incompetence or psychopathy, can be remedial of just such circumstances as bring a person's proper orientation to his environment into question; where, further, the 'delict' prototype is central to the intelligibility and thus the effectiveness of the work done by these behaviors. The argument is elegant and powerful, and it is on this basis that I recommend publication.

Ref. B

Notes -- 5

21. re. "...its intended recipient is likely to confirm...before our utterance is completed."

This confirmation-prior-to-completion specification promises some delicate and technical considerations which don't materialize. It is not clear whether, by 'confirmation', an actual utterance is intended, or, e.g., an observable alignment to speaker of the summoning utterance. I take it that the latter is intended. This may turn out to be technically interesting, e.g., that while a summoning utterance is still in progress, an unequivocal summoning component has reached completion, where such components are short and rapidly completable by design, so that someone can decide very rapidly that (or not) they have been summoned (e.g., to reduce the time in which someone is standing there yelling and no one has as yet aligned as a recipient of a summons, and correlatively, to reduce the time in which someone might be unsure as to whether the yelling is a summons to him or, e.g., a constituent component of some business which did not involve him); where it may be the case that a summoning utterance's summoning component can be further broken down in terms of a hearer's response; i.e., at onset of the object, hearer goes into 'alert' but does not yet initiate an aligning move, has not yet done a 'response'; the response being initiated when the component has been adequately delivered and is recognizably that and not something else. If it turns out not to be a summons component, then no response has been initiated (there might be observable increase in tension, perhaps even a mild 'startle', but not a commitment to a "confirmation of the existence of the required environment").

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September 22, 1977

Professor William Bright, Editor
LANGUAGE
Department of Linguistics
University of California
Los Angeles, California 90024


Dear Professor Bright:

Re my paper "Response Cries."

First, I am greatly impressed by the speed of the reading, and acutely alive to the fact that you selected two readers likely to support an outsider's interactionist efforts. I therefore assume that although both outside readers had some reservations, other outside readers and perhaps yourself, could be expected to have more.

Reader A's suggestions were not extensive, and I have responded to them where I could. Gail Jefferson's critique is another matter. Her overall recommendation to cut extraneous issues would produce a paper of the kind she does very well, but cut such strengths as is possessed by the sort of thing I do. Her eleven pages of specific suggestions, however, were really quite remarkable, a product of a closer and more loving reading than anyone deserves. I disagree with a small number outright, and a few, again, speak to her own style of work. But the rest are very useful indeed. In almost every case, then, I have made changes where she had questions, although I may not have carried these changes in the direction she might prefer.

In addition, the changes I have made in response to both readers, although very numerous indeed, may not, I fear, answer the questions you yourself have, and in addition, do not make the paper any less long. A revised copy is enclosed.

Sincerely,

Erving Goffman

EG/lad

Enclosures

Summer 1977: Erving Goffman sends a manuscript Response Cries to LANGUAGE.

August 23: Jefferson returns two pages arguing for "Recommendation to publish" and "Recommendation to delete and revise" and adds 11 pages with 51 detailed comments. This is an example for one of these comments.

September 22: Goffman returns the edited manuscript with a letter.

William Bright, Editor of LANGUAGE, sends the manuscript for review to Allen D. Grimshaw and Gail Jefferson. Grimshaw returns two pages of comments, stating "I very much like the paper and believe that it should be published".

August 26: William Bright sends the reviews to Goffman.

December 1978: Response Cries is published in LANGUAGE, Vol. 54 (4) pp. 787-815.