

Reading Cicourel's Ethnomethodology

Nobuo SHIINO

Abstract:

Cicourel tries to integrate structural conceptions with the contingencies of everyday social interaction. He understands social structure as accounts of situated social interaction. What is important to him is the way in which normative and situated representational devices are used to communicate human experiences and knowledge-claims of everyday social structure.

He thinks that the understanding of social structure remains an accountable illusion of sociologists' common-sense knowledge unless we can reveal a procedural connection between interactional sequences among actors and structural framework. While the existing theory of status or role seems to provide a convenient shorthand for the observer to describe the actor's behaviour in social life, the notions of 'status' and 'role' as a structural feature of social order seldom point to the interactional consequences of everyday life.

Cicourel thinks that any reference to the actor's perspective must cover both the researcher's and the actor's attempts to negotiate everyday activities or to organize socially acceptable behaviours over the course of social interaction in the situated settings. In this paper we examine Cicourel's social theory which deals with social interaction form within the actor's perspective over the course of the situated settings.

(1) Cicourel's trial

In his paper "Interpretive Procedures and Normative Rules in the Negotiation of Status and Role"⁽¹⁾, Cicourel tries to integrate structural conceptions of 'status', 'role', 'norm' and 'value' (social structure : institutionalized features of social order) with the contingencies of everyday social interaction (social process : interactional situation among actors). He understands social structure as accounts of situated social interaction (or cognitive and contextual process of everyday social organization). What is important to him is the way in which normative and situated representational devices are used to communicate human experiences and knowledge-claims of everyday social structure.

He thinks that the understanding of social structure remains an accountable illusion of sociologists' common-sense knowledge unless we can reveal a procedural connection between interactional sequences among actors (or cognitive process and contextual

activities) and structural framework (or normative or 'objective' accounting systems). Notions like 'status', 'role' and 'norm' cannot be clarified unless the researcher's model explicitly provides for procedures enabling the actor to recognize and generate 'appropriate' behavioural displays over the course of social interaction. Our descriptions of social structure must always incorporate the way in which normative accounts presuppose an unstated reliance upon the complex interactional process. Cognitive process and contextual meanings play a central role in understanding how normative rules are involved when you account for particular activities in the situated social interaction.

Cicourel argues that the general problem of specifying how people (actors or observers) in everyday life negotiate 'appropriate' behavioural displays over the course of social interaction in the situated settings cannot be resolved with the existing social science theory of status or role.⁽²⁾ 'Appropriate' behavioural displays are operative behaviours for the actors based upon 'institutionalized' role-status-norm relevance. Cicourel labels this socially acceptable behaviour as the social structure. The course of social interaction is context-restricted or sensitive in the situated settings.

While the existing theory of status or role seems to provide a convenient shorthand for the observer (or the social analyst) to describe the actor's behaviour in social life, the notions of 'status' and 'role' as a structural feature of social order (or as the normative system) seldom point to the interactional consequences of everyday life. Even if the theory of status or role refers to social interaction, the theory tends to use the terms (like 'status', 'role' and 'norm') which might not be relevant categories for the actor in the course of social interaction. That is, the existing theory of status or role itself presupposes another theory of social meaning and cognitive procedures in the social interaction or social process.

Thus, the researcher's model of the actor in 'status' and 'role' theory taken-for-grantedly or tacitly rests upon interpretive procedures (the actor's logic-in-use) (common to both the actor's and observer's methods) for negotiating 'appropriate' behaviours over the course of social interaction.

This kind of status or role theory does not disentangle the detached observers' interpretations from those of the actors over the course of social interaction in the situated settings. Cicourel thinks that any reference to the actor's perspective must cover both the researcher's and the actor's attempts to negotiate everyday activities or to organize socially acceptable behaviours over the course of social interaction in the situated settings.

(2) Cicourel's model of social interaction

Then, Cicourel tries to explore a model of social interaction that provides for interpretive procedures and their interaction with normative rules. The actor (and the

observer) must be endowed with basic or interpretive (inductive) procedures that permit him or her to recognize 'appropriate' behavioural displays in the actual organized situated settings. The interpretive procedures are designed to function as a base structure for generating the 'appropriate' behavioural displays, that is, for sustaining a sense of social structure, over the course of changing social interaction in the situated settings. (The interpretive procedures are like deep structure of grammatical rules.)

The actor also must articulate general rules or norms with an emergent interactional settings in order to recognize the meaning of 'appropriate' behavioural displays over the course of social interaction. The norm would be the surface structure which provides a more general institutional validity to the meaning of the social interaction. The normative rules enable the actor to link his view of the world to that of others in the organized social interaction and to presume that consensus or shared agreement governs the interaction.

The use of general rules or norms always requires interpretive procedures for recognizing the relevance of behavioural displays over the course of interaction in the actual situated settings. That is to say, the interpretive procedures enable the actor to articulate general normative rules with immediate interactional scenes. The interpretive procedures provide a sense of social order that is fundamental for normative order (consensus or shared agreement) to exist.

The two orders are always in interaction in reference to how the actor recognizes relevant behaviours over the course of social interaction. The interpretive procedures and normative rules provide the actor with a scheme for partitioning his or her environment into domains of relevance. The articulation of interpretive procedures and normative rules provides the actor with a basis for organizing 'appropriate' behaviours over the course of social interaction in the situated settings. (The acquisition and use of interpretive procedures over time amounts to a cognitive organization that provides a continual sense of social structure.)

(3) Interpretive procedures

Interpretive procedures would be specified as a set of invariant properties that govern the nature of minimal (or fundamental) conditions of all interaction (that is, the fundamental base structure of social interaction) so as to indicate how the actor and observer decide that the interaction is 'normal' or 'proper' over the course of the interaction. The following features are proposed as basic to all interaction (according to A. Schutz).

(a) a reciprocity of perspectives

This procedure is divided into two parts.

(1) The speaker and hearer assume their mutual experiences of the interactional

scene are the same even if they were to change places.

- (2) Each participant disregards personal differences in how each assigns meaning to everyday activities, thus each can attend the present scene in an identical manner for the practical matters at hand.

Each participant must reconstruct this deep structure if there is to be coordinated social interaction to occur.

- (b) sub-routines or *et cetera* procedures

This procedure accompanies the use of the reciprocity of perspectives. One sub-routine consists of the actor's ability to treat a given particular lexical item as an index of larger networks or sets of meaning as in normative developments of items. An item may be assigned tentative meaning and then, later, 'locked-in' with a larger collection of items retrospectively.

- (c) the idea of normal form typifications

Participants presume normal forms of acceptable interaction. The procedure instructs the actor to recognize particular instances as 'acceptable' representations of a more general normative set. Hence notions like 'status', 'role' and 'norm' cannot be relevant to an understanding for everyday social interaction unless the actor possesses a procedure for subsuming particulars under general normative rules, that is, for typifying the world in the interaction.

In the ideal the observer's common-sense typifications cannot be identical with those of the participants in the social interaction. In the actual practice, however, the actor's everyday typifications are probably not much different from the observer's. Both employ the same interpretive procedures for describing everyday activities. Then, the observer cannot objectify his or her observations without making explicit the properties of interpretive procedures, because the observer must rely upon interpretive procedures when subsuming 'recognized' behavioural displays under concepts derived from his or her scientific vocabulary.

(4) The articulation

Throughout the paper Cicourel has tried to discuss terms like status, role and norm within a general model for characterizing social interaction and the perspectives employed by participants. Everyday experience for the actor is at any particular moment partitioned into various domains of relevance whereby common-sense interpretive procedures taken for granted are employed for generating 'appropriate' behaviours in the course of interaction. The use of general rules or norms, and their long-term storage, always require interpretive procedures for recognizing the relevance of actual, changing scenes, orienting the actor to possible course of action, the organization of behavioural displays and their reflective evaluation by the actor.

The interpretive procedures govern the sequencing of interaction and establish the

conditions for evaluating and generating behavioural displays which the researcher labels as appropriate status and role attributes or conduct. The articulation of interpretive procedures and surface (normative) rules establish a basis for concerted interaction which we label the social structures. That is to say, if the interpretive procedures and normative rules are articulated, then social interaction in the situated settings is organized into domains of relevance.

This theory deals with a general model of social interaction over the course of everyday activities in the situated settings "from within" the actor's perspective of a 'contemporary'. Cicourel criticizes professional sociologists in that almost all sociological theories always substitute the observer-researcher's perspective for the actor's perspective, when they look at the level of social interaction to describe the actor's behaviours. They push the observer-researcher's perspective into the actor's perspective over the course of social interaction in the situated settings.

In the ideal the actor and the observer-researcher employ different kinds of perspectives (constructs, categories, or procedural rules). However, Cicourel thinks, in actual practice, differences between the actor ('practical theorist') and the observer-researcher ('academic theorist') may all but disappear when both describe everyday activities over the course in the situated settings. Both must employ the same interpretive procedures and similar typifications. The actor's everyday theorizing is probably not much different from the observer-researcher's.

The actor's perspective in this sense is different from the actor's perspective in social science sense in that the actor's perspective in this sense is the actor's perspective over the course of social interaction in the situated settings, while the actor's perspective in social science sense is the actor's perspective based upon only 'objective' normative system in society. Therefore, this theory can be applied to everyday activities "from within" the actor's perspective over the course of social interaction in the situated settings.

(5) Relationships among concepts

- (a) The use of normative rules requires interpretive procedures.
- (b) The two are in interaction.
- (c) Interpretive procedures are a deep structure for generating 'relevant' interaction.
- (d) Interpretive procedures enable the actor to articulate normative rules with interaction.
- (e) The articulation of interpretive and normative rules establishes a basis for 'relevant' interaction.

Cicourel's theory is not interested in specifying determinancy of relationships between the concepts. Also the theory did not say much about how the actors learn the interpretive procedures.

(6) Evaluating Cicourel's theory

The theoretical proposition (universal and conditional statement) is stated rather evidently in the text. However, the terms like 'articulation' and 'relevance' are used as primitives, so the theoretical claim is still ambiguous. In this theory the mechanism and extent of 'articulation' and 'relevance' are not specified. The strict meaning of "base" or "deep structure" of interpretive procedures is still not clear. Then, the proposition can be more rigorous. Basic theoretic idea is rather clear, but problems still remain. The more clear relationships between normative rules and interpretive procedures; the definition of domains of relevance ; the definition of a sense of social structure ; the definition of social interaction, etc.,.

This theory deals with social interaction "from within" the actor's perspective over the course of the situated settings. This theory is not interested in a level of social activities that is removed from the work necessary for recognizing and organizing socially acceptable behaviours that Cicourel labels the social structures. This theory is not interested in social interaction observed from a detached point of view, that is, 'reified', context-free, or 'objective' features of social interaction. The actor must be situated in the settings of social interaction. This theory can be applied to social interaction as the course or the achievement. We can get various kinds of empirical facts of social interaction from within the actors over the course of the situated settings in everyday life. However, the difficulty is the validity of the actors to the situated settings. The actor must be the actor over the course of the settings.

The ideas and concepts of the orienting strategy of ethnomethodology (by H. Garfinkel) are fairly well reflected on the theory of ethnomethodology by Cicourel. Both are interested in members' common-sense ways for organizing social interaction in the situated settings (or accountably rational properties ; interpretive procedures). Both refer to the social reality as accounting practices of ongoing situated interaction from the perspective of members to the situated settings. Both are interested in the problem of a sense of social order. Both are studying the formal properties of members' procedures of accounting practices in the situated settings in order to understand the social order, by means of using the same ideas and concepts in ethnomethodology.

Ethnomethodology is actually a sociological theorizing movement for preparation of manuals on sociological 'methods' (which is distinct from "reified" procedures of 'professional sociological inquiries'). Ethnomethodology is interested in organizationally situated methods used taken-for-grantedly by actors in the situated settings for making sense of the social order for-all-practical-purpose in everyday life. Therefore, it is essential for ethnomethodology to use the same ideas and concepts both in practice and in theory, though there are several variations in ethnomethodology.

In this point there still remain some doubts on Cicourel's theory. The problem is

whether or not Cicourel's actor over the course of social interaction in the situated settings within his general model of interaction is really the actor over the course of social interaction in the situated settings. It is not so clear how he can validate this. On what valid basis can he lay claim to this correspondence? First of all, can the trial to construct a model of interaction itself settle this problem? we are skeptical about model-construction for this resolution. we shall take a praxeological turn for the better "theorizing" in ethnomethodology.

Notes:

- (1) In Cicourel, 1973. pp. 11-41. This article appeared in Sudnow(ed).
- (2) 'negotiate' is interchangeable with recognize, evaluate, generate, perceive, interpret, organize, order, assign meanings to, construct, decide, establish and so on.

Reference:

- A.V.Cicourel, 1964. *Method and Measurement in Sociology*, Free Press. (アアロン・シクレル著 下田直春監訳『社会学の方法と測定』新泉社、1981.)
- ,1968. *The Social Organization of Juvenile Justice*, Wiley.
- ,1970. "Basic and Normative Rules in the Negotiation of Status and Role," in Dreitzel(ed.), pp.4-45.
- ,1973. *Cognitive Sociology: Language and Meaning in Social Interaction*, Macmillan.
- ,1981. "Notes on the Integration of Micro- and Macro-levels of Analysis," in Knorr-Cetina and Cicourel, pp.51-80.
- & J.I.Kitsuse 1963. *The Educational Decision Makers*, Bobbs Merrill, (アアロン・V. シクレル/ジョン・I・キツセ著 山村賢明ほか訳『だれが進路を決定するか—選択機関としての学校—』金子書房、1985)
- H.P.Dreitzel,1970. *Patterns of Communicative Behavior (Recent Sociology No.2)*, Macmillan Com.
- K.Knorr-Cetina and A.V.Cicourel(eds.) 1981. *Advances in Social Theory and Methodology: Toward an Intergration of Micro- and Macro-sociologies*. Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- A.Schutz, 1962. *Collected Papers I: The Problem of Social Reality*, M.Natansoh (ed.), Nijhoff. (アルフレッド・シュッツ著 渡辺光ほか訳『アルフレッド・シュッツ著作集 第2巻 社会的現実の問題』マルジュ社、1985)
- D.Sudnow(ed.), 1972. *Studies in Social Interaction*, Free Press.