

Cambridge University Press  
978-0-521-77206-8 - Laughter in Interaction  
Phillip Glenn  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

## Laughter in Interaction

*Laughter in Interaction* is an illuminating and lively account of how and why people laugh during conversation. Bringing together twenty-five years of research on the sequential organization of laughter in everyday talk, Glenn analyzes recordings and transcripts to show the finely detailed coordination of human laughter. He demonstrates that its production and placement, relative to talk and other activities, reveal much about its emergent meaning and accomplishments. The book shows how the participants in a conversation move from a single laugh to laughing together, how the matter of “who laughs first” implicates orientation to social activities, and how interactants work out whether laughs are more affiliative or hostile. The final chapter examines the contribution of laughter to sequences of conversational intimacy and play, and to the invocation of gender. Engaging and original, the book shows how this seemingly insignificant part of human communication turns out to play a highly significant role in how people display, respond to, and revise identities and relationships.

PHILLIP GLENN is Associate Professor and Chair at the Department of Organizational and Political Communication, Emerson College. His publications include *Studies in Language and Social Interaction* (co-editor, 2002), *Your Voice and Articulation 4th edition* (co-author, 1998) and *Media '95: Experiences and Expectations Five Years After* (editor, 1996).

Cambridge University Press  
978-0-521-77206-8 - Laughter in Interaction  
Phillip Glenn  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

## Studies in Interactional Sociolinguistics

### EDITORS

Paul Drew, Marjorie Harness Goodwin, John J. Gumperz,  
Deborah Schiffrin

*Discourse strategies* John J. Gumperz

*Language and social identity* edited by John J. Gumperz

*The social construction of literacy* edited by Jenny Cook-Gumperz

*Politeness: some universals in language usage* Penelope Brown and  
Stephen C. Levinson

*Discourse markers* Deborah Schiffrin

*Talking voices* Deborah Tannen

*Conducting interaction* Adam Kendon

*Talk at work* edited by Paul Drew and John Heritage

*Grammar in interaction* Cecilia E. Ford

*Crosstalk and culture in Sino-American communication*  
Linda W. L. Young

*Aids counselling: institutional interaction and clinical practice*  
Anssi Peräkylä

*Prosody in conversation* edited by Elizabeth Couper-Kuhlen and  
Margaret Selting

*Interaction and grammar* edited by Elinor Ochs, Emanuel  
A. Schegloff and Sandra M. Thompson

*Credibility in court* Marco Jacquemet

*Interaction and the development of mind* A. J. Wootton

*The news interview* Steven Clayman and John Heritage

*Gender and politeness* Sara Mills

*Laughter in interaction* Phillip Glenn

Cambridge University Press  
978-0-521-77206-8 - Laughter in Interaction  
Phillip Glenn  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

# Laughter in Interaction

PHILLIP GLENN



**CAMBRIDGE**  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press  
 978-0-521-77206-8 - Laughter in Interaction  
 Phillip Glenn  
 Frontmatter  
[More information](http://www.cambridge.org)

PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE  
 The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RP, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS  
 The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge, CB2 2RU, UK  
 40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA  
 477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia  
 Ruiz de Alarcón 13, 28014 Madrid, Spain  
 Dock House, The Waterfront, Cape Town 8001, South Africa  
<http://www.cambridge.org>

© Phillip Glenn 2003

This book is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception  
 and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,  
 no reproduction of any part may take place without  
 the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2003

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

*Typeface* Sabon 10/13 pt.    *System* L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X 2<sub>ε</sub> [TB]

*A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library*

*Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data*

Glenn, Phillip J.

Laughter in interaction / by Phillip Glenn.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0 521 77206 0

1. Conversation analysis. 2. Laughter. 3. Social interaction. I. Title.

P95.45.G57 2003

302.3'46 – dc21 2002041682

ISBN 0 521 77206 0 hardback

Contents

<i>List of figures and tables</i>	<i>page</i> viii
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	ix
<i>Transcription symbols</i>	xi
Introduction	1
1 Towards a social interactional approach to laughter	7
2 Conversation analysis and the study of laughter	35
3 Laughing together	53
4 Who laughs first	85
5 <i>Laughing at</i> and <i>laughing with</i> : negotiating participant alignments	112
6 Laughing along, resisting: constituting relationship and identity	122
7 Closing remarks	162
<i>Notes</i>	172
<i>References</i>	177
<i>Index</i>	188

Figures and tables

Figure

1.1	Picture of sound image of a stream of laughter	<i>page 11</i>
-----	--	----------------

Tables

4.1	Initiation of shared laughter in conversation by speaker (current or other) and by number of parties (two or multi)	88
6.1	Distribution of laughs by sex and by shared/not shared (from Jefferson, 1994)	154
6.2	Distribution of laughs by sex and by shared/not shared (from Glenn, Hoffman, and Hopper, 1996)	156

## Acknowledgments

Parts of this book began in my doctoral dissertation from the University of Texas at Austin, completed in 1987. Robert Hopper directed it. He was my mentor, colleague, and friend until his death in 1998, and he remains an influence and inspiration to me. Madeline Maxwell, Joel Sherzer, Mark Knapp, and John Daly guided me as committee members. Gail Jefferson's research appears prominently in this book, and I follow her path with the greatest respect for her work. I've profited from occasional correspondence and talks with her. I continue to learn about the study of talk-in-interaction from many people, particularly Emanuel Schegloff and Anita Pomerantz. Wayne Beach has provided encouragement and rich talks about research. Paul Drew has given enormously helpful and substantive feedback on drafts of this book. Other sources of help, feedback, and encouragement include Eric Kramer, Gene Lerner, Bob Sanders, Kristine Fitch, Jenny Mandelbaum, Curt LeBaron, and Bryan Crow. Colleagues and students at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale provided me a supportive intellectual community during the time I wrote most of this book. Dean Shirley Clay Scott of the College of Liberal Arts at SIUC provided funding so I could take time off from being department chair during Summer 2000 to work on the book. I appreciate the assistance of many fine graduate assistants over the past several years, including Lance Lippert, Liz Gullickson-Tolman, Patreece Boone, Alex Kozin, Stephanie Poole-Martinez, Sam Thomas, Sunita Sunderrajan, and Cade Farmer. Thanks to the staff of Cambridge University Press for being most helpful, especially my editors Andrew Winnard and Lesley Atkin. I've presented parts of this research at the Department of Communication, University of Texas at Austin; Department of Communication, University of

Colorado, Boulder; Department of Communication, University of Iowa; and School of Communication Studies, San Diego State University. Each has given me the opportunity to refine my work. Liliana Cirstea Glenn deserves huge credit for love, support, sustenance, critical discussion, and so much more. For these and many other personal and intellectual influences, I am grateful.

Chapter 3 reworks two previous publications. The multi-party interaction part appeared in *Western Journal of Speech Communication* (Glenn, 1989). The two-party discussion appeared in *Research on Language and Social Interaction* (Glenn, 1992). Chapter 5 on *laughing at* and *laughing with* is rewritten from an article that appeared in an edited volume of conversation analytic research (Glenn, 1995). Chapter 6 draws on an earlier conference paper, co-authored by Erica Hoffman and Robert Hopper (Glenn, Hoffman, and Hopper, 1996, March). An earlier version of parts of Chapter 6 appears as a chapter in a book (Glenn, 2003) and had an earlier incarnation as a conference paper (Glenn, 2000). The Car Talk from NPR excerpt (Chapter 6) is used with permission from hosts Tom and Ray Magliozzi, c 1997 Dewey, Cheetham & Howe, all rights reserved.

Transcript excerpts used in this book come from a variety of sources. Many are based on recordings I have collected myself or others have given me. These are designated by an identification code that marks collection, tape, and/or page, such as “UTCL AIO,” “SIU JM 99,” or “RAH II.” I either created these transcripts myself, or I revised them from originals by someone else. Where a transcript item is cited from a chapter or article by another author, I have included its source, and sometimes in those sources the authors provide additional locational data (e.g., GTS:I:1:14, 1965, in Jefferson, 1985, p. 28). I invite readers to contact me if interested in obtaining copies of any of my transcripts or recordings.

Finally, I would like to dedicate this book to the family that nurtures and sustains my spirit to laugh, especially my mother, Ethel Chappell Glenn; my uncle, Wallace Chappell; and my wife, Liliana Cirstea Glenn.



## Transcription symbols

Adapted from system developed by Gail Jefferson, printed in J. M. Atkinson and J. Heritage (eds.) (1984) *Structures of social action; studies in conversation analysis* (pp. ix–xvi). Cambridge University Press.

[ ]	brackets indicate overlapping utterances.
=	equal marks indicate contiguous utterances, or continuation of the same utterance to the next line.
(.)	period within parentheses indicates micro pause.
(2.0)	number within parentheses indicates pause of length in approximate seconds.
yes:	colon indicates stretching of sound it follows.
yes.	period indicates falling intonation.
yes,	comma indicates relatively constant intonation.
yes?	question mark indicates upward intonation.
yes!	exclamation indicates animated tone.
yes-	single dash indicates abrupt sound cutoff.
<u>yes</u>	underlining indicates emphasis.
YES	capital letters indicate increased volume.
°yes°	degree marks indicate decreased volume of materials between.
hhh	h indicates audible aspiration, possibly laughter.
•hhh	raised, preceding period indicates inbreath audible aspiration, possibly laughter.
ye(hh)s	h within parentheses indicate within-speech aspiration, possibly laughter.

xii	Transcription symbols
((cough))	items within double parentheses indicate some sound or feature of the talk which is not easily transcribable, e.g. “((in falsetto)).”
(yes)	parentheses indicate transcriber doubt about hearing of passage.
↑yes	upward arrow indicates rising intonation of sound it precedes.
↓yes	downward arrow indicates falling intonation of sound it precedes.
£yes£	pound signs indicate “smile voice” delivery of materials in between.