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A REVIEW OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH CONDUCTED USING THE INDUCTIVE METHOD IN SOCIOLINGUISTICS AND DELL HYMES' WORK	DELL HYMES VE TOPLUMDİLBİLİMDE TÜMEVARIM YÖNTEMİYLE YÜRÜTÜLEN NİTEL ARAŞTIRMALAR HAKKINDA BİR İNCELEME

ABSTRACT

This study examines the operational limits of the inductive method in sociolinguistics, tracing its trajectory from Dell Hymes' foundational Ethnography of Communication (1974) to contemporary contact sociolinguistics. In this field, where fieldwork is of considerable importance, both deductive and inductive methods are employed, and sociolinguistic phenomena are examined using both quantitative and qualitative data. By contrasting Labovian deductive-quantitative traditions with Hymes' qualitative-inductive approach, the analysis highlights this fundamental tension. While the inductive method excels at describing complex, localized phenomena, its capacity to produce universal laws is constrained by its inherent context-sensitivity. Addressing the methodological ambiguity between qualitative data collection and theoretical generalization, the study analyzes key theoretical frameworks and specific case studies, such as "crossing" and "superdiversity." The review aims to evaluate whether these inductive approaches, which prioritize context-dependent *emic* meanings, can validly generate broad *etic* sociolinguistic theories. This critical review concludes that concepts such as superdiversity often serve as descriptive labels rather than transformative theories, cautioning against detaching inductive findings from the natural flow of communication acts. In short, the scope and objective of this study are to provide a general and comprehensive overview of inductive qualitative research in sociolinguistics, enabling its conduct while also addressing its limitations.

ÖZET

Bu çalışmanın amacı, Dell Hymes'ın kurucu niteliğindeki *Ethnography of Communication* ("İletişimin Etnografisi") (1974) eserinden çağdaş toplumdilbilime uzanan ekseni takip ederek, toplumdilbilimde tümevarım yönteminin işleyiş sınırlarını incelemektedir. Saha çalışmasının büyük önem taşıdığı bu alanda, hem tümdengelim hem de tümevarım yöntemleri kullanılmakta, toplumdilbilimsel olgular nicel ve nitel veriler kullanılarak incelenmektedir. Çalışmanın çözümlemesi, Labovcu tümdengelimci-nicel gelenekler ile Hymes'ın tümevarımcı-nitel yaklaşımını karşılaştırarak bu temel gerilime dikkat çekmektedir: Tümevarım yöntemi karmaşık ve yerel olguları betimlemede başarılı olsa da, evrensel yasalar üretme kapasitesi, özündeki bağlam duyarlılığı nedeniyle sınırlıdır. Nitel veri toplama ile kuramsal genelleme arasındaki yöntembilimsel belirsizliği ele alan bu çalışma, temel kuramsal çerçeveler ve "crossing" ile "süperçeşitlilik" gibi kavramsal çalışmaları, kapsayıcılıkları bakımından değerlendirmektedir. İnceleme, bağlama bağlı *emik* anlamları önceleyen bu tümevarımcı yaklaşımların, geçerli bir şekilde geniş kapsamlı *etik* toplumdilbilimsel kuramlar üretip üretemeyeceğini değerlendirmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu eleştirel inceleme, süperçeşitlilik gibi kavramların dönüştürücü kuramlardan ziyade sıklıkla betimleyici işlev gördüğü sonucuna varmakta ve tümevarımsal bulguların, gözlemlenen iletişim eylemlerini doğal akışından koparması ihtimaline karşı uyarıda bulunmaktadır. Kısaca, bu çalışmanın kapsamı ve amacı, toplumdilbilim araştırmalarının yürütülmesine olanak tanıyan tümevarımcı nitel araştırmalara genel ve kapsamlı bir bakış sunarken aynı zamanda bu yöntembilimin sınırlılıklarını da ele almaktır.

Keywords: Sociolinguistics – Inductive Method – Qualitative Fieldwork – Dell Hymes – Ethnography of Communication

Anahtar kelimeler: Toplumdilbilim – Tümevarım Yöntemi – Nitel Saha Araştırmaları – Dell Hymes – İletişimin Etnografisi

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Introduction

Following early studies that established the link between linguistic phenomena and their speakers, William Labov's assertion that "sociolinguistics is linguistics" helped solidify the discipline's place within the linguistic sciences since the 1960s (Calvet, 1993, p. 4)[1]. This momentum within the social and human sciences has also fostered methodological diversity (Blanchet, 2012). On the one hand, Noam Chomsky and his generative linguistics, following the American structuralism current, framed the initial research around the analysis of quantitative data of Labov, while Dell Hymes, who adopted the ethnographic approach promoted by anthropology, aimed to analyze qualitative data using inductive methods; both researchers guided pioneering research in the field of sociolinguistics (Hymes, 1974). During the 1960s and 1970s, Labov and Hymes simultaneously developed two distinct methodological approaches through foundational research that shaped the field of sociolinguistics.

Despite the solidification of these distinct traditions, contemporary sociolinguistics often faces a methodological ambiguity where the boundaries between data collection and theoretical generalization are blurred. While the "quantitative-deductive" lineage of Labov is well documented, the epistemological mechanisms of the "qualitative-inductive" tradition, rooted in Hymes' work, require renewed critical examination. This review is necessary because, as the field increasingly turns toward complex phenomena like superdiversity (as shown below), it proposes new terms such as crossing. Consequently, there is a tendency to apply inductive findings to general theories without fully addressing the limitations Hymes cautioned against initially. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by systematically revisiting the operational definitions of the inductive and qualitative method in Hymes' ethnography and evaluating its capacity – and incapacity – to generate broad sociolinguistic theories in current contact sociolinguistics.

Another main objective of this study is to demonstrate the differences in sociolinguistic approaches mentioned above. To this end, Labov's research and Hymes' book, *Foundations of Sociolinguistics* (1974), will be used to discuss the fundamental methodological differences. The methodological differences will be linked to the main currents in sociolinguistic research, namely variationism, interactionalism and contact sociolinguistics (fr. sociolinguistique de contact)[2]. However, in line with the primary purpose of this study, these currents will only be discussed in terms of the sociolinguistic issues they highlight and examine. In line with the examination of the distinctions between deductive and inductive methods, the role that quantitative and qualitative research have acquired in relation to the core objects of sociolinguistics would also be explored. Along these two axes, the goal is to assess whether a general theory can emerge from detailed ethnographic analyses of original cases in sociolinguistic studies conducted using the inductive method, as pioneered by Hymes and subsequent scholars.

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[1] All bibliographical citations and quotations from French sources in this study have been translated by the author; citations from English sources could have been paraphrased also by the author if necessary.

[2] The last and current trend in sociolinguistics examines the phenomena arising from language contact in different parts of the world. As "sociolinguistics is linguistics" and as in French, contact sociolinguistics (fr. sociolinguistique de contact) is a widely accepted term pointing out the study of mobility resulting from migration and globalization, I prefer using this term and it will be abbreviated as "CSL" in this study (see Simonin & Wharton, 2013). Translation suggestions were made by considering the English equivalents of the terms, using the dictionary of linguistics by İmer, Kocaman, and Özsoy (2011) as a reference; the term "interaction," which could correspond to both "interactionalism" and "contact sociolinguistics," was used for only one of them. On the other hand, Yaman (2024, p. 215) refers to the movement we call CSL in this study as "migration linguistics," which overlaps significantly.

Based on the purpose of the study and its contribution to the literature defined above, the scope of this review is limited explicitly to the trajectory of the inductive method from Hymes' seminal work (*Foundations in Sociolinguistics*, 1974) to contemporary debates in contact sociolinguistics. Rather than attempting an exhaustive history of the field, this study critically selects and examines foundational theoretical frameworks and recent case studies – specifically "crossing" and "superdiversity" that claim to utilize qualitative fieldwork data. While the transition from Labovian deductive quantitative methods to Hymes' inductive qualitative approach is historically documented, the epistemological limitations of applying the latter to generate broad sociolinguistic theories remain under-discussed – except for a few works such as that of Hambye (2015). Consequently, the aim and the scope of this study do not merely summarize the literature but evaluates the extent to which current inductive qualitative research adheres to the "emic" validation Hymes originally proposed, and where it risks forcing context-bound data into generalized "etic" categories.

1. Differences between deductive and inductive methods in sociolinguistic studies

When Labov's pioneering works, such as "The Social Motivation of a Sound Change" (1963) and "The Social Stratification of (r) in New York City Department Stores" (1973), are examined in general terms[3], he had a well-reasoned hypothesis before embarking on his field research and that his work aimed to evaluate this argument with quantitative data. Based on this methodology, the analyses proceed through inferences and strive to present the most general interpretation encompassing the majority of the data and observations, because only in this way can the validity of the initial thesis be tested. In addition, Labov's early work is very valuable for the emergence of sociolinguistics, especially the variationist movement. It is associated with structuralism in terms of the identification of variables, the argumentation without a thorough examination of causes' meanings, and the evaluation of the argument through formal changes in structures in light of quantitative data using deductive reasoning (İmer, Kocaman & Özsoy, 2011, pp. 265-266). Another prominent researcher of the variable approach in sociolinguistics, Shana Poplack, has also adopted a similar methodological approach to code-switching, describing the transitions between languages made by Hispano/Anglophone speakers while also examining them in their social contexts (see Poplack, 1982, 1988). Thus, sociolinguistics has for many years adopted a methodological approach based on deductive reasoning, evaluating its claims using quantitative data. Nevertheless, since the 1970s, Labov (1973) has greatly refined research techniques and the study of field data, particularly in his study "Language in the Inner City: Studies in Black English Vernacular" (1972). He (1973) has moved away from deductive reasoning and quantitative data concerns. This can be seen as a concession he made to examine a comprehensive variable within a sociolinguistic framework. However, it also shows that he was not strictly bound to structuralist approaches and accepted the flexibility required by the research. Labov's methodological shift can be exemplified by his decision to solicit informants rather than develop interview techniques to break the observer's paradox (1973, p. 113). The individuals tasked with collecting data were sent to neighbourhoods with a high concentration of native African Americans after undergoing training by Labov and his team to obtain the most accurate data possible. Additionally, unlike previous field studies, Labov did not aim to collect data on variables he had personally defined; instead, he developed his analysis based on free speech segments (Calvet, 1993, pp. 67–71). Thus,

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[3] See Calvet (1993, pp. 61-86) as a valuable resource for an in-depth review of Labov's work.

instead of collecting several samples sufficient to verify the representativeness of a given data set, he obtained a collection that was mainly qualitative. His approach to the data changed to an inductive method because he could not predict which data to prioritize based on which argument. Labov has made a methodological change by prioritizing inductive reasoning, moving from quantitative research toward ethnographic and qualitative data, with more in-depth data collected over a long period from African American sources within the speaking group. From these perspectives, it is acceptable to consider that Labov's subsequent studies have transcended the boundaries of structuralism. Looking at these methodological details in his research and their place, in sociolinguistics, it is possible to use these methods separately or simultaneously according to the context and the unique characteristics of the research object to better apprehend and analyze. Interactionist and CSL currents have also made significant contributions to methodological pluralism in the field by developing and applying inductive methods and qualitative approaches in recent times.

At this juncture, it would be relevant to delineate the principal features of the inductive method. This study operationally defines the inductive method in sociolinguistics as a specific bottom-up analytical trajectory described and significantly contributed to by Hymes and Gumperz, also partially by Labov, as he opposes the Chomskyan approach, which considers language as a uniform grammatical system (Milroy & Gordon, 2003, p.7; 9-10). Thus, begging from early sociolinguistics, the inductive method appears in contrast to deductive strategies that begin with a structuralist model to be tested against data. The key features of this methodology may be outlined as follows: Firstly, observing speech events and then moving toward the identification of patterns is one of them. The validity and consistency of the analysis are thereby established from the outset, in accordance with the method's orientation. Secondly, Hymes (1974) puts it that the goal is to discover the rules of speaking (the core communication elements) derived directly from the community's own norms rather than imposing external linguistic categories (p. 4). Consequently, a study could be classified as inductive if the primary data consists of naturalistic, context-dependent communicative acts (namely, qualitative data), and if the analysis generates theoretical categories (emic[4]) only after the observation of these acts, rather than using them to validate an existing framework (Hymes, 1974, p. 12). Lastly, the requirement to conduct fieldwork is thus regarded as a crucial prerequisite for working with the inductive method. Gumperz put forward a distinction in his seminal work, differentiating the traditional approach to empirical knowledge among American and European researchers by categorizing them as "those working in the field" and "those working in the office" (Milroy & Gordon, 2003, p. 9). Nowadays, sociolinguistics is widely observed to favour a decidedly field-oriented empirical approach. This consequently allows the current methodology to be designated as empirico-inductive, and it is highly correlated with qualitative research (as will be elaborated in section 2 below).

According to Hymes, ethnography, rather than linguistics, is the foundation of sociolinguistics, enabling the examination of language within the context of culture and society. Unlike linguistics, the object of ethnography is not language itself but communication as a whole (1974, p. 4). The information that needs to be studied in sociolinguistics is not based on abstract forms or communities. Instead, it is based on the flow of concrete communication patterns and, therefore, on the social context in which communication takes place. Thus, it focuses on the

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[4] See Section 3 below for difference between "emic" and "etic".

meaning of language phenomena for speakers rather than on forms (Hymes, 1974, p. 5). This methodological approach contradicts the structuralist linguistic approaches highlighted above, as it emphasises that any information derived from field research cannot be abstracted when the research object is being examined. Accordingly, as detailed in the following sections, Hymes' approach can be said to have qualitative value.

In *Foundations of Sociolinguistics* (1974), Hymes argues that one of the most fundamental points is that speakers cannot be used as models or as templates for a comprehensive theory. He asserts rather that modelling exists for speakers because the phenomenon known as communication originates from a specific small group of speakers or a group of people who speak the same language (p. 8). According to him, when attempting to determine the characteristics of a speech community[5] (which is one of the main objects of sociolinguistics), it is preferable to use inductive reasoning to analyze the points at which they differ linguistically within or from each other, and to examine the points that the actors of communication point to. Through to this prioritized ethnographic approach, the description of communication can be made by taking into account not only verbal productions but also many other elements related to communication, in line with the perspective and interests of the community, and by evaluating the common knowledge and insights of the community members as a source (Hymes, 1974, p. 8). Thus, Hymes placed the "ethnography of communication" at the foundation of sociolinguistics, defining the field's problematic as the configuration of languages and other communication tools in communities and their boundaries (1974, p. 9).

The ethnography of speech, or more broadly, ethnography of communication, developed by Hymes and adopted by the interactionist school, is a detailed examination of the rules governing how a community of speakers conveys messages and the conditions under which these messages are perceived. In doing so, the group's linguistic diversity is subjected to sociolinguistic analysis; social, political, economic, and other important factors related to the community are taken into account. Moreover, every day, natural, and spontaneous language production, along with all related linguistic phenomena, can be studied directly within the context of social life (1974, p. 45). In such approach, the boundaries of the language community, the multiplicity of speech forms, the channels of communication, the conditions under which messages are evaluated, the observation of skills, the distribution of roles among speakers, the construction of message meanings, etc., are observed in the natural flow of social life to generate data. The analysis of this data, the result of field research, is conducted using the inductive method. Thus, the ethnographically grounded inductive method allows for highly detailed sociolinguistic studies, ranging from the analysis of individual conversations to the study of speech patterns within large communities.

Likewise, during field research, rather than focusing on the initial hypothesis using the deductive method to explain the connection between particular variables and certain social factors, the inductive method is particularly effective in uncovering and interpreting linguistic phenomena. Especially, the act of speech (interaction), which is at the center of small-scale linguistic communication, and also in understanding the complex multilingualism practices shaped by

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[5] Silverstein (2015, p. 9) defines the speaking group as all individuals who evaluate spoken communication in terms of its appropriateness and function within the context, and who accept linguistic productions as comprehensive and interpretable according to the rules of the group. On the other hand, Hymes (1967, p. 54) approaches the speaking group as a social phenomenon before considering it from a linguistic perspective and emphasizes that its description should consider all the language and variations used by the group.

migration and mobility, which have been extensively studied in CSL on a large scale can be studied in depth. Indeed, a significant portion of current sociolinguistic research adopts the inductive method and has revisited Hymes' work over the past twenty years in light of its enduring analytical value[6]. Besides, this fundamental methodological difference also affects the data type used: in research conducted using the inductive method, sociolinguists mostly work with qualitative data.

2. Qualitative research in relation to the inductive method

Unlike the quantitative approach, which establishes cause-and-effect relationships based on large amounts of data and presents analysis based on figures, qualitative research focuses on empirical knowledge distilled from lengthy observations and detailed descriptions. The latter places the research object in context, considers space and time, and includes interpretations blended with information about the object. Using a qualitative approach in sociolinguistics goes beyond treating linguistic productions as mere statistical data, considering the dynamics of context and society and studying the entirety of social actors' experiences, perceptions, intentions, and behaviours, enabling them to be examined and understood in their natural existence. As anthropologist Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sadran (2008, p. 11) emphasizes for all social and human sciences, sociolinguistic studies also develop based on empirical knowledge grounded in the principle of realism shaped by qualitative research methods. Consequently, the researcher's communication and connection with the field have emerged as a crucial element in enabling the data to approximately represent reality, thereby opening the door to scientific interpretation. As can be seen, qualitative research differs from quantitative research in that it contextualizes sociolinguistic phenomena and issues, considers all data worthy of note, and presents them as close as possible to their actual state, thereby enabling scientific interpretation and analysis.

As Hymes emphasizes, sociolinguistics, at the intersection of linguistics and social anthropology (1974, p. 87), prioritizes language issues in urbanized countries – Hymes gives the examples of England and the US – while addressing issues related to education and social life (1974, p. 84), is actually seen as a scientific discipline that conducts ethnography of communication and description of speech. At this point, it is important to note once again that qualitative research is more suitable for examining the complex ethnolinguistic (Akkuş, 2024) patterns of today, particularly the CSL issues that emerge in the centres of large cities. Given that, the ethnography of communication treats speech acts as a cultural behaviour whole, and this whole must certainly be related to diversity, that is, cultural and social diversity and the interaction of different groups (Hymes, 1974, p. 89). With such a perspective, in sociolinguistics, especially in CSL, topics related to plurilingualism (fr. plurilinguisme), diglossia[7] (fr. diglossie),

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[6] One example is the 139th issue of *Langage & Société*, an important international sociolinguistics journal, published in 2012. The fact that this thematic issue was published in 2012 and that Hymes' work was brought back into the spotlight with contributions from important sociolinguists is closely related to the current value of the inductive method. Regarding the scope of this study, Hymes' important work Foundations of Sociolinguistics is addressed directly.

[7] Plurilingualism, as Beacco (2005, p. 19) states, refers to the use of more than one language during an interaction, regardless of the speakers' abilities, while diglossia (fr. diglossie; for the Turkish equivalent, see İmer, Kocaman & Özsoy, 2011, p. 316) refers to the power relationship between one language (or variant) and another in monolingual or multilingual contexts. For the definition of plurilingualism, see also Py & Gajo (2013); for diglossia, see also Fishman (1967) and Simonin & Wharton (2013).

"superdiversities,"[8] and language ideologies[9] (fr. ideologies linguistiques), and the importance given to the qualitative power of data on speakers and/or speaking groups, rather than quantity, have become inevitable when conducting field research[10].

At the same time, this inductive and qualitative method, highlighted by Hymes (1974, p. 5), prioritizes the description of all dimensions of communication and the hierarchical pattern in the entire communication event. With this in mind, Hymes (1974, p. 11) warns that a limited number of theories distilled from empirical data are sufficient to predict and evaluate an infinite number of cultural and sociolinguistic behaviours; nonetheless, no matter how systematically observations are repeated, it is impossible to achieve high levels of objectivity and validity. This fundamental concern regarding qualitative research has been part of the methodological debates in sociolinguistics since the early 1970s, with the work of Hymes and Gumperz, one of the pioneers of the interactionist movement (see Hambye, 2015). Looking at more contemporary researchers, this concern has vastly diminished, and contemporary sociolinguistic research is conducted with a significant adoption of qualitative approaches[11]. The original studies describing the representations and discourses of social actors who produce linguistic phenomena limited by space and time are highly context-bound. Therefore, the question of whether it is possible to develop comprehensive theories from individual sociolinguistic cases detailed through inductive qualitative research approaches has been significant for sociolinguists studying this method, developed with Hymes' contributions.

3. Limits of Qualitative Research Conducted Using the Inductive Method

In a social and human science such as sociolinguistics, as Hymes also points out (1974, p. 86), the examination and interpretation of qualitative data naturally stem from the close connection between this science and other social sciences, such as anthropology, sociology and communication. This allows a better understanding of the speakers' communicative acts, the elements of language and the context of these acts, as well as the evaluation of representations of linguistic phenomena. In broad outline, the methodology described above also has some limitations, which will be illustrated in this section through terms proposed by ethnographic studies, such as "crossing" and "superdiversities".

Regarding the representativeness and numerical adequacy of the data in capturing the research object, inductive qualitative approaches may raise concerns compared to quantitative research. In this case, we can see that quantitative research data better classifies and reduces the object in question, providing precise, concise results. Thus, quantitative research can yield

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[8] Silverstein (2015, p. 7) states that in sociolinguistics, the phenomenon of "superdiversities" refers to all new and creative linguistic identities and practices that are frowned upon or ignored by the nation state, arising from economic or political migration or international mobility (induced by globalization). For this reason, this term is frequently used in current research in CSL, for example, see Blommaert, Rampton & Spotti (2011).

[9] According to Silverstein (1979, p. 193), language ideologies are a whole set of beliefs acquired through objectification or rationalization processes about languages, their social representations, structures, and practices.

[10] The explanations provided in this section are intended to outline the topics of sociolinguistics and CSL; as they are not the focus of this study, these definitions have not been elaborated upon. To give an example, Kroskrity (2004, p. 500) directly links the concept of language ideologies to studies that prioritize the meaning (distanced from structuralist approaches) and social dimension of linguistic phenomena and to Hymes's important contribution to the ethnography of communication approach.

[11] Examples of relatively short-term city-focused ethnographic studies include Rampton (1995), Léglise (2013), İstanbullu (2017), and Altınsoy (2021). Example of a series of studies spanning relatively longer periods includes Gasquet-Cyrus's 2012, 2017, 2018, and 2021 sociolinguistic descriptions of the city of Marseille.

comprehensive theoretical conclusions, or at least clear cause-and-effect relationships, propose direct solutions, or provide descriptions understandable to everyone. On the other hand, qualitative research, which allows for more complex classifications, data that attempts to reflect all diversity as it is, and the researcher's interpretations, may be considered less competent in terms of reaching comprehensive theoretical conclusions, as it limits space and time based on the dynamics of the field.

Nevertheless, since the emergence of sociolinguistics, the main point has been to convey and analyze sociolinguistic phenomena in a way that is as consistent as possible with the natural flow of social life: "If we want to understand people's sociolinguistic lives, we must see them in their own environment, through their own eyes, not in a different context 'imposed' by the researcher, or worse still [...] in the artificial environment of a laboratory." (Blanchet, 2012, p. 165). Here, the importance of field research and the researcher's connection to the reality of their field is once again emphasized, while it is also understood that there may be room for interpretation in qualitative research. Consequently, by means of this capacity of immersive interpretation, inductive qualitative research can provide better in-depth insight about sociolinguistic phenomena. To do so, the concepts of *emic* and *etic*[12], which are used in the social and human sciences, can be utilized for the accuracy and scientific validity of the analyses and interpretations that sociolinguists will present based on qualitative data. The emic approach (fr. émique), as defined by de Sadran (1998, p. 157), recognizes that the researcher's interpretations, which are part of the research, are also part of sociolinguistic phenomena and realities, along with the speakers' views on their own linguistic phenomena. Therefore, according to the author, the emic approach is synonymous with "internal perspective," "dominant representation," and "local cultural meaning" and does not differ much from the etic approach, i.e., definitions coming from outside (de Sadran, 1998, p. 158). The emic approach is thus understood at four basic levels: "discourse data," "social representations," "cultural rules," and "ways of thinking and acting" (de Sadran, 1998, p. 158). Since ethnographic and qualitative field research is a methodological whole that aims to convey data in its most natural form, closest to reality, it is possible to subject the creation and analysis of data to a process of analysis and interpretation within the boundaries of the emic definition (de Sadran, 1998, p. 163). Thus, the representativeness of qualitative data, despite the small sample size, stands out as being at least as strong as that of quantitative data due to its ethnographic descriptive and interpretative capacity. One can conclude that combining qualitative and quantitative data in the inductive method helps analyse field research, understand facts, and comprehend results.

While valid points for individual studies take shape in this way, it would be appropriate to recall Hymes' warning, which was also mentioned in the previous section, to answer the question of whether a comprehensive theory could emerge from studies conducted using this method: no matter how systematically we repeat our observations, we can never achieve high levels of objectivity and validity. (1974, p. 11) The point to be emphasized here is not the inadequacy of ethnographic field research; but rather that even if empirical and contextually bound qualitative data are multiplied in number, their accuracy is linked to their ability to reflect the reality of social life as a whole. Therefore, they cannot be abstracted to the desired level when constructing a general theory. In this case, while it does not seem feasible to arrive at broad concepts and theories

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[12] See (Terzioğlu, 2022) for Turkish spelling of the terms and also for their definitions in Turkish, https://ansiklopedi.tubitak.gov.tr/ansiklopedi/emik_ve_etik (Last date of access: 10.07.2025).

based on qualitative data resulting from field research through induction, such attempts have been made in CSL. In evaluating the limits of the inductive method, it is thus essential to analyze specific attempts where researchers have tried to bridge the gap between qualitative (ethnographic) data and macro-sociolinguistic theory. The concepts of "crossing" (Rampton, 1995) and "superdiversity" (Blommaert et al., 2011) are selected in this study as the primary studies for this critique because they represent the most significant efforts in recent Contact Sociolinguistics to scale up inductive findings. These examples are critical to this review because they illustrate the tension Hymes predicted: the difficulty of maintaining the validity of context-bound, qualitative observations when abstracting them into generalized concepts applicable across different speech communities.

The concept of "crossing" (Rampton, 1995) appears as one of the most well-known examples of such experiments in the literature. This concept emerged from a field study conducted in England, using an inductive method and qualitative data. It observes young plurilingual speakers in a particular age group, disregarding their ethnic origins, and uses forms of speech they would not normally use and did not inherit (Hambye, 2015, p. 92). This sociolinguistic phenomenon is a reality of plurilingualism that appears in many contexts worldwide and has been exemplified in various sources (see Jørgensen et al., 2011). However, Rampton did not limit the definition of "crossing" to his own research, but instead presented it as a broader concept that describes data similar to that obtained by abstracting his ethnographic field research from its context, and attempted to demonstrate its difference from other concepts previously proposed and widely accepted in the literature through several characteristics (e.g., code-switching) (Hambye, 2015, pp. 92-93). However, he has not been able to go beyond repeating everyday situations in plurilingualism, such as the disappearance of language boundaries and the instant borrowing of words. The author proposed instead this broad concept based on data that find their meaning in the context of the phenomenon they represent by examining singular fields, such as "the way young people speak", "migrant and non-migrant" (Hambye, 2015, pp. 93-94). In this case, even though authentic and qualitative field research is diversified, one observes that a concept such as "crossing" cannot be used to apprehend and analyze all plurilingual situations; it can only be used when it is meaningful in the context of the speakers, in addition to the reality of the field that is observed and conveyed through ethnographic induction.

Apart from "crossing," another concrete example is "superdiversities," which, as mentioned in previous sections, are used in sociolinguistics, particularly in CSL, to define and to analyze multilingualism situations as a result of qualitative field research conducted through an inductive method. In contexts such as those in the European Union, where intense migration and mobility are common, such terms may be meaningful for describing sociolinguistic phenomena. However, their use in other fields may not be sufficient to understand and conceptualize the context in which the speakers find themselves (Canut & Duchêne, 2011, pp. 11-12). Particularly, "superdiversities" could be considered an understanding developed alongside the neo-liberal language policies of the European Union, primarily through the CEFR model. These policies promote plurilingualism in specific superdiverse contexts, such as European metropoles; however, the latter model simplifies linguistic competences and learning objectives, and holds individuals responsible for predetermined language levels (Boufoy-Bastick, 2015). Future plurilinguals who create superdiverse settings become thus economically vulnerable to these requirements as state or private institutions leave them to their own means, creating linguistic hierarchies and inequalities

among speakers (Lynch, 2006). Consequently, in many superdiverse contexts, qualitative data show the loss of ethnolinguistic boundaries, with the intent to primarily describe the new generation of migrants who have achieved the status of "economically well integrated plurilinguals" (see Lefranc, 2014; and Lynch, 2006). However, the broader use of superdiversities, if used by one as a descriptive tool of a sociolinguistic field where ethnolinguistic boundaries are incredibly meaningful, could blind the analysis in favour of neo-liberal linguistic policies[13]. Thus, in sociolinguistics, where the semantic dynamics of context are definitely taken into account, it may be beneficial to consider the boundaries of theoretical generalizations, outlined by researchers who have contributed to this methodological framework, to grasp the meanings indicated by the field in terms of analysis and interpretation.

In light of the preceding discussion, while Rampton's 'crossing' successfully identified a specific rupture in the correlation between language and ethnicity through induction, its transformation into a generalized theory risks detaching the phenomenon from the 'natural flow of social life' that Hymes prioritized10. Similarly, while "superdiversities" serves as a descriptive tool for complex urban mobility and migration, it faces the limit of becoming an "etic" label that may not fully capture the "emic" reality of the speakers, which is the ultimate goal of the inductive qualitative approach. Thus, these examples demonstrate that while the inductive method excels at uncovering new phenomena, its power to generate universal sociolinguistic laws remains constrained by the very context-sensitivity that gives it value.

Conclusion

In this study, based on Dell Hymes' *Foundations of Sociolinguistics* (1974), the differences between the deductive and inductive methods used in sociolinguistic research are explained, drawing on relevant sources. One main objective of this study was to clarify the operational definition of the inductive method, which contrasts with deductive strategies that begin with a structuralist model. Although the inductive method is more commonly employed outside Labov's early studies and the variationist tradition, it is important to recognize that both approaches can be used complementarily.

An attempt was made to demonstrate, based on other sources in the literature, that inductive qualitative research in sociolinguistics, as Hymes also pointed out, is effective in analyzing detailed data closely tied to the realities of the field and thus in understanding any sociolinguistic problem. However, the capacity to generate broad sociolinguistic theories was critically assessed. This assessment recalled Hymes' fundamental caution (1974, p. 11) that no matter how systematically observations are repeated, it is impossible to achieve high levels of representativeness, objectivity and validity. This fundamental limitation stems from the fact that empirical and contextually bound qualitative data, while accurately reflecting the reality of social life, cannot be abstracted to the desired level when constructing a general theory.

These constraints were illustrated through attempts in CSL to scale up findings, using the concepts of "crossing" and "superdiversity". Critically, the synthesis of case studies highlights the strength of the inductive method lying in its context-sensitivity. However, this very strength becomes a limitation when researchers attempt to scale up local findings into generalized

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[13] Regarding the scope of this study, "superdiversities" is critically considered as a generalized term linked to the qualitative and inductive sociolinguistic fieldwork; for more details, particularly on micro-scale effects of linkage with neo-liberal linguistic policies, consider also the work of Alexandre Duchêne (see Duchêne, 2011).

sociolinguistic terms and concepts to be applied in different fields (contexts). Therefore, this study concludes that a comprehensive general theory cannot easily emerge solely from inductive qualitative research without compromising the contextual depth that gives the method its value. Future research in CSL should, therefore, prioritize methodological transparency, explicitly acknowledging that inductive findings are often descriptive of specific ethnolinguistic boundaries rather than predictive of universal sociolinguistic behaviours. Researchers must distinguish between (e.g.) describing a superdiverse context and claiming a new theoretical paradigm, ensuring that the connection between the researcher's interpretation and the field reality remains methodologically valid within the limits of the emic perspective.

In conclusion, inductive qualitative research should continue to prioritize the description of all dimensions of communication and the hierarchical pattern in the entire communication event, as framed by Hymes (1974). However, researchers utilizing the inductive method must be keenly aware of the inherent limits of producing broad concepts and theories when the aim is to reflect the reality of localized, context-dependent communicative acts. This concise methodological review is expected to contribute to the field by highlighting the methodological boundaries that must be considered when attempting theoretical generalization based on qualitative, inductive field research.

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