



# WHAT & WHY

## Combining etic and emic perspectives

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# In our presentation...

- We are not introducing any particular method, but...
- present a **methodological approach** that is based on the complementary perspectives of *etic* and *emic*.
  
- We are not arguing that this approach is a one-size-fits-all solution, but...
- will illustrate its **applicability** with some examples.
  
- We encourage each of us to consider whether integrating these two perspectives could enhance the potential of our research.



# History of the concepts of emic and etic <sup>1/3</sup>

The concepts originated within **linguistics**.

- **phonetics** is the description of **all sounds** that can be distinguished in any language.
- **phonemics** is the description of **the set of sounds** that are meaningful within a single language.

→ Coined by linguist and antropologist Kenneth L. Pike in 1954 “as a response to the need to include nonverbal behavior in linguistic description” (Pike 1990: 18).

Pike, K. L. 1954. *Language in relation to a unified theory of the structure of human behavior*. Dallas, TX, US: Summer Institute of Linguistics.

Pike, K. L. 1990. On the emics and etics of Pike and Harris. In Headland, T., Pike, K. L. & Marvin, H. 1990. *Emics and Etics: The Insider/Outsider Debate*. *The Journal of American Folklore* 105. 10.2307/541632.

## Slide 3

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**HL1**

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## History of the concepts of emic and etic <sup>2/3</sup>

“ I took the word phonemic, crossed out the *phon-* part meaning ‘sound’, and generalized my use of the new *emic* term to represent **any unit of culture, at any level, of any kind**, which was reacted to as a relevant unit by the native actors in that behavior. In the same way, I created the word *etic* from *phonetic*. (Pike 1988: 154–155)

In anthropological terms:

**An ~~phonetic~~ perspective** is one defined by the investigator independently of any particular context, and which can therefore serve as a basis for comparisons across cultures.

**An ~~phonemic~~ perspective** is grounded in the worldview of the participants, reconstructed by the researcher, and corresponds to the meanings participants themselves attach to their experience.

Pike, K.L. 1988. Cultural relativism in relation to constraints on world view — an emic perspective. *Bulletin of the Institute of History and Philology* 59: 385–399.



# History of the concepts of emic and etic <sup>3/3</sup>

- In **anthropology**, emic and etic have become such established features of the basic vocabulary that they are no longer *italicized*, or necessarily sourced or defined.
  - “ Unfortunately, emic and etic have become slogans or catchwords in anthropology, rather than clear-cut concepts. (Crane and Angrosino 1984: 125)
- In the 1970s, terms were increasingly used also in **other fields**
  - especially psychology but also linguistics, intercultural research, ethnography, sociology, medicine...
- They received very **different definitions** from one researcher to another and from one field to another
  - **emic – etic** could refer to •verbal – nonverbal, • specific – universal, • interview – observation, • subjective knowledge – scientific knowledge, • good – bad, • ideal behaviour – actual behaviour, • description – theory, • private – public, • soft facts – hard facts...

Crane, J. G., & Angrosino, M. V. 1984. *Field projects in anthropology: a student handbook*. Prospect Heights, Ill.: Waveland Press.

Headland, T. & Pike, K. L. & Harris, M. 1990. Emics and Etics: The Insider/Outsider Debate. *The Journal of American Folklore*. 105. 10.2307/541632.



# Why combine etic and emic <sup>1/4</sup>

Pike's innovation was to turn away from an epistemological debate between the objectivity and subjectivity of knowledge, and **turn instead to a methodological solution.**

- Employing etic and emic as **two methodological perspectives.**
  1. Etic = a researcher-analyst's outsider perspective
  2. Emic = a practitioner-informant's insider perspective

Pike, K. L. 1954. *Language in relation to a unified theory of the structure of human behavior*. Dallas, TX, US: Summer Institute of Linguistics.



## Why combine etic and emic <sup>2/4</sup>

Instead of viewing either etic or emic as superior, they are rather **two methodological perspectives on the same behaviour**.

“ Different information is gained from each form of analysis. (Hahn et al. 2011: 4)

→ We see them as **complementary ways** to approach the process or phenomenon under scrutiny.

Hahn, C., Jorgenson, J., Leeds-Hurwitz, W. 2011. A Curious mixture of passion and reserve. Understanding the etic/emic distinction. *Education et didactique*. 5.3.





## Why combine etic and emic 3/4

Later, Dell H. Hymes clarifies (1970: 281–282) Pike's idea\* that insiders normally are **not** conscious of their emic system nor able to formulate it for the researcher. So, he pointed to the **distinction** between:

- **The insider's view** = able **to do** something within a culture competently
- **The emic view** = able **to describe** it accurately

\*Using the concept of *phonemic* entails the fundamental fact that untrained native speakers **can use** but **cannot identify** phonemes in their mother tongue.

Hymes, D. H. 1970. Linguistic method in ethnography: Its development in the United States. In P. Garvin (ed.), *Method and theory in linguistics*. The Hague: Mouton.



## Why combine etic and emic 4/4

- **The insider's view** = able **to do** something within a culture competently
  - **The emic view** = able **to describe** it accurately
  - When it comes to unforgettable, one-off events, these two views might **coincide**
    - e.g. studying how people act in a fire situation by interviewing people who have experienced it.
  - However, examining **daily routines** by asking general questions about them is “as if the researcher were ‘outsourcing’ the task of generalisation to the informant” (Haapanen 2018: 57).
- To mitigate this inherent dilemma, **insider's view often benefits from being supported by etic data to achieve accurate emic point of view.**

Haapanen, L. 2018. Overcoming methodological challenges in text production research: a holistic approach through data triangulation. *AFinLA-e: Soveltavan kielitieteen tutkimuksia* 11, 45–70.



# Etic and emic in sum

- Etic and emic are methodological perspectives.
- They are complementary ways of gathering data.
- Insider's view often benefits from being supported by etic data to achieve accurate emic knowledge.
  - + Gathering of etic data can also be informed and guided by emic knowledge.



# Combining emic and etic perspectives: Case 1

RQ: **How** have news routines in Hong Kong changed in response to the tightening of information flow due to the digitization of police and emergency communications?

1. Interviews with journalists
  - Semi-structured, 15 journalist, 2012–2014
2. Content analysis of newspaper articles
  - Two data sets: before (2002–2003) and after (2012–2013) the digitization that took place during the years 2004–2012.

Cheung, M. and Wong, T. 2016. Censorship and Changing Gatekeeping Roles: Non-Routine News Coverage and News Routines in the Context of Police Digital Communications in Hong Kong. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 93 (4): 1091–1114.



# Combining emic and etic perspectives: Case 2

RQ: **What** sources do online journalists use – and **why**?

1. Ethnographic observation at newsrooms
  - Seven sites, fifteen participants
  - 110 hours of observation, 113 journalistic articles

2. Interviews with observed journalists
  - Semi-structured
  - Including **stimulated recall** of work practices

= a method to reconstruct the trains of thought (typically videotape as a stimulus)

Manninen, V. 2017. Sourcing practices in online journalism: an ethnographic study of the formation of trust in and the use of journalistic sources. *Journal of Media Practice*, 18 (2–3), 212–28.



# Combining emic and etic perspectives: Case 3

RQ: **How** do journalists quote, and **why** do they quote as they quote?

- Conventional option: Semi-structured interview about quoting.
- I did it (Haapanen 2011).
  - The answers mostly repeated the ideal procedures presented in journalism guidebooks.

Haapanen, L. 2011. Sitaattien tehtävät ja tekeminen kaunokirjallis-journalistisissa lehtijutuissa. *Media & viestintä*, 34 (3), 64–89.



# Combining emic and etic perspectives: Case 3

RQ: **How** do journalists quote, and **why** do they quote as they quote?

- data set 1: journalistic interviews (transcribed)
- data set 2: published articles

## **Method for data collection: stimulated recall**

- my application: data sets 1 (= interviews) and 2 (= articles) as stimuli

→ data set 3: **retrospective verbalisation**

- revealed actual quoting practices, not biased generalizations or sugar-coated impressions
- “ I was kind of stunned myself when I realized that these [quotes] have been edited this much.

Haapanen, Lauri. 2017. Quoting in written journalism (doctoral thesis consisting of four articles). Helsinki: University of Helsinki.



# Combining emic and etic perspectives: Case 4

RQ: **How** do journalists integrate online research procedures into their overall research process?

1. Ethnographic observation at newsrooms
  - 34 journalistic organisations
  - 235 journalists, 1 959 hours
2. Survey of journalists
  - 601 participants
3. Experiment with journalists
  - 48 participants

Machill, M. and Beiler, M. 2009. The Importance of the internet for journalistic research. *Journalism Studies* 10:2, 178-203.





# Something to consider

- Emic and etic can take many forms, they need not always be content analysis and interview.
- Interviewees can only provide researchers with knowledge that they are conscious of, willing to share and capable of articulating.
- Diverse data gathering might require lots of preparation (e.g. planning, gaining access, narrowing scope), human resource intensive field work and entail challenges in an analysis phase.
- “ Methodological complexity is a good predictor of research gaps.

Perrin, D. 2019, lecture at University of Jyväskylä on 18 January.