

Interactional sociolinguistics

Foundations, developments, and applications to language, gender, and sexuality

Cynthia Gordon and Deborah Tannen (Part III leads)

Introduction

There is general agreement that the field known as ‘interactional sociolinguistics’ traces back to the theoretical and methodological approach developed in the late 1970s by Gumperz and laid out in his book *Discourse Strategies* (1982a). In the decade immediately following, work in this paradigm was done primarily by Gumperz and his students, or those who had been trained by, or worked directly with, him or his students. In the years since, however a testament to the power and influence of the approach Gumperz pioneered the term ‘interactional sociolinguistics’ (IS) has come to include a broad range of qualitative microanalyses of recorded, naturally occurring interactions conducted with attention to the social context in which the interaction took place. Our goal in this introduction is to provide a kind of genealogy of the field and overview of its development with brief summaries of exemplary studies. Towards that end, we recap the key terms, concepts, and methods that characterise Gumperz’ foundational work as well as some of the additions and elaborations that have been adapted into the framework and have come to be associated with it.¹ We conclude with a sampling of studies that draw on Gumperz’ and related approaches to examine language and gender, and the smaller number of studies examining language and sexuality, an area we hope will benefit from such investigations going forward.

John Gumperz’ conception of interactional sociolinguistics

Interactional sociolinguistics (IS) is a qualitative, interpretative approach to the analysis of the language of real interaction in the context of social relationships. It is founded on the convictions that language can only be studied in context and that it is constitutive of context. In other words, context is not something pre-existing that language fits into but rather the language of interaction creates context as well as social relationships and identities. The goal of IS, then, is no less than accounting for the communication of meaning through language use. The word ‘use’ is crucial. IS views meaning not as inherent in words, but rather as jointly created by speakers and listeners engaged in the act of using language to accomplish interactive goals. In order to understand and explicate this process, IS methodology

involves an ethnographic component in the form of observation in naturally occurring contexts, often participant-observation; audio- or audiovisual-recording of interaction; detailed linguistic transcription of recorded conversations; microanalysis of interaction as reflected in the transcripts in light of the information gained through ethnography; and post-recording 'playback' interviews with participants and others from similar sociocultural backgrounds.

The first publication in which Gumperz laid out his approach that later became known as interactional sociolinguistics is a paper entitled 'Sociocultural knowledge in conversational inference', which he gave at the 1977 Georgetown University Round Table on Languages and Linguistics (GURT) and was published in the collection of papers from that conference (Gumperz 1977). It provides a window onto the roots and foundations of IS. (This paper, in slightly adapted form, appears as Chapter 7 in *Discourse Strategies*.)²

It is worth noting that the term 'interactional sociolinguistics' does not appear in *Discourse Strategies*, even though that book is the first in the Cambridge series entitled 'Studies in Interactional Sociolinguistics', and Gumperz was a founding co-editor of the series. Gumperz (1977, 1982a) initially referred to his approach as a 'theory of conversational inference', but he later (Gumperz 2001) uses 'interactional sociolinguistics' to identify his approach, possibly to distinguish it from Labovian variation analysis, the other dominant sociolinguistic theory and method, and from the other dominant approach to analysing recorded conversational interaction pioneered by Sacks and Schegloff that has come to be known as conversation analysis (CA).

In contrast to these approaches, IS research has long had an expansive quality to it, as Schiffrin (1994: 97) notes: 'The approach to discourse that I am calling "interactional sociolinguistics" has the most diverse disciplinary origins' among those she discusses. She traces IS to both Gumperz and Goffman, whom Gumperz frequently mentioned as one of several scholars who influenced him and whom he called a 'sociological predecessor' of his work (Gumperz 2001: 216). Goffman's many books were transformational in providing close analysis of behaviour in everyday life, beginning with his groundbreaking 1956 *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. However, it was not until his 1981 *Forms of Talk* that he turned attention to language. By the time Schiffrin wrote *Approaches to Discourse*, many of those who had adopted Gumperz' interpretive theories and methods also made ample use of Goffman's notions of footing, alignment, and other aspects of framing, as Schiffrin herself did (see for example Schiffrin 1993).

Roots and foundational concepts of Gumperz' interactional sociolinguistics

In the introduction to his 1977 essay 'Sociocultural knowledge in conversational inference', Gumperz identifies three 'major research traditions that have dealt with social factors in speech' (1977: 192), acknowledging what he sees as the contributions of each to understanding language in interaction, then pointing out shortcomings that his own approach will address. These traditions are (1) the ethnography of speaking, (2) linguistic pragmatics, and (3) ethnomethodology, or the sociology of verbal interaction. We will recap what he says about these approaches as a way of introducing and explaining aspects that Gumperz himself regarded as key to his theory of IS, and to provide insight into some of the roots of and influences on his theory. (There are others that he mentions in later essays and interviews.)

Gumperz traces the first of these three traditions, 'the ethnography of speaking', to the work of Hymes (1962), and to their own joint collection (Gumperz and Hymes 1972), whose title and subtitle, *Directions in Sociolinguistics: The Ethnography of Communication*, imply

that the two refer to a single field. Shortly after this volume's appearance, the two scholars seem to have divided the field between them: Hymes went on to lead the field 'ethnography of speaking' while Gumperz went in the direction of qualitative 'sociolinguistics'. Their collaboration can be traced further back, to the 1964 special issue of *American Anthropologist* they co-edited, which includes papers by many of the same scholars included in their 1972 collection. In his 1977 GURT essay, Gumperz credits 'ethnography of speaking' with using 'anthropological methods of interviewing and participant observation' to describe culturally specific speech events. (In later writing, he traces his notion of 'speech activity' to that of 'speech event'.) He argues, however, that such descriptive methods do not adequately account for 'how people integrate social knowledge in interaction' in ordinary, everyday conversations (1977: 193). That will become one of the main goals of IS.

'Linguistic pragmatics', the second research tradition that Gumperz sees as predating his own, is, in his view, 'an effort to give linguistic substance to the philosophers' notions of speech act and verbal games' and 'motivated primarily by a concern with abstract linguistic theory' (1977: 194). He cites Fillmore (1977), Gordon and Lakoff (1973), and Halliday and Hasan (1976) as linguists seeking to build on the work of philosophers such as Wittgenstein, Austin, Grice, and Searle to go beyond simple grammatical analysis to account for how speakers use words to accomplish speech acts, but concludes that this approach is limited in focusing only on the speaker, failing to account for the fact that 'conversing is rather like collaborating in the production of a play, where each person's contribution is constrained by what the others can do and what the audience will accept' (Gumperz 1977: 194). Gumperz thereby highlights another key element of IS: that meaning does not reside solely in the words spoken but is jointly created by speaker and hearer. This insight, the significance of which cannot be overstated, is inherent in Gumperz' notions of 'conversational inference' and 'thematic progression'. By using the term 'conversational inference' to refer to his own approach, Gumperz emphasised that listeners must be able not only to decode the words spoken but also to identify what the speaker intends by saying them. Even that is insufficient on its own. 'Thematic progression' refers to the need for listeners to also be able to predict what the speaker is likely to say next. Thus, for example, a native speaker, by recognising listing intonation, will know, on hearing only the first word or phrase, that it will be followed by one or more additional words or phrases – a prediction necessary to fully understand the meaning of the first words spoken.

The third research tradition Gumperz discusses, 'ethnomethodology', includes what is now commonly referred to as 'conversation analysis' or CA. He credits this approach with having 'gone a long way toward producing a theory which treats conversation as a cooperative endeavor, subject to systematic constraints' (1977: 197) and therefore sees its findings as 'basic to the study of conversational inference' (1977: 195). He cites Garfinkel (1967, 1972) for the key insight that 'social knowledge is revealed in the process of interaction itself' (1977: 195). He credits 'Harvey Sacks and his collaborators' (specifically Garfinkel, Schegloff, Jefferson, and Turner) as 'the first to focus systematically on conversation as the simplest instance of a naturally organized activity, and to the process of conversational cooperation as a thing in itself ...' (1977: 195-196). He goes on to say, however, that this tradition cannot account for many of the essential elements of conversational interaction that his own approach will: 'how speakers use verbal skills to create contextual conditions that reflect particular culturally realistic scenes'; how 'speakers' grammatical and phonological knowledge' is 'employed in carrying out these strategies'; and how they are 'able to recognise culturally possible lines of reasoning' necessary to follow thematic progression

(1977: 197). Gumperz is thus emphasising the need to bring linguistic and anthropological perspectives to the work of these sociologists.

Yet another key element of IS is in focus in the first sentence of *Discourse Strategies*: 'This book seeks to develop interpretive sociolinguistic approaches to the analysis of real time processes in face to face encounters' (1982a: vii). Of significance here is not only the term 'real time' IS always analyses naturally occurring recorded conversation but also the term 'interpretive'. The significance of this aspect of IS cannot be overestimated. The interpretive nature of IS analysis is essential because meaning in interaction is emergent, and listening – that is, gleaning meaning from language – is itself an interpretive process. To critics, this is the soft underbelly of IS: interpretation cannot be proved. Also problematic is the difficulty, if not impossibility, of teaching interpretation. Tannen recalls a conversation in which Labov (personal communication) remarked that anyone who learns his method can apply it successfully, but the type of analysis developed by Gumperz, like that of Goffman, depends for its insight and usefulness on the analyst's perspicacity, which cannot be taught.

In addition to its roots in and connections to sociology, IS also sits at the intersection of linguistics and anthropology, as does its founder's own career. Gumperz was on the faculty of the anthropology department at the University of California, Berkeley, though he received his PhD in linguistics at the University of Michigan. Many of those whose work is characterised as IS, including many who trained with Gumperz, are linguistic anthropologists. Indeed, the terms 'linguistic anthropologist' and '(interactional) sociolinguist' are sometimes used interchangeably to refer to the same scholars, and both are used by some scholars to refer to themselves.

Social justice as an aim of interactional sociolinguistics

Like much early sociolinguistic work, Gumperz' was founded on the conviction that uncovering the role of linguistic phenomena in face-to-face interaction would contribute to the cause of social justice. Gumperz developed his approach not only as a way of explaining the interpretive nature of talk but also to address the consequences of real-life misunderstanding and misjudgements of abilities and intentions, that can lead to injustice and discrimination, in particular against ethnic minorities. This is evident in the research sites where he developed the theories and methods that became IS, where he focused on gatekeeping encounters, a locus and concept originated by Erickson (1975). In *The Counselor as Gatekeeper*, Erickson and Shultz (1982: xi) define gatekeeping encounters as situations in which 'two persons meet, usually as strangers, with one of them having authority to make decisions that affect the other's future'. This dynamic, and the character of Gumperz' research site, are illustrated by the photograph on the cover of *Language and Social Identity*, the collection of papers by Gumperz and his students and collaborators that was a companion volume to *Discourse Strategies*: a Southeast Asian woman wearing a sari sits at the end of a desk looking up at a white British man sitting behind the desk wearing suit and tie, holding a pen poised over paper in a notebook or folder. It is evident that she is applying or asking for something, and that he plays a role in determining whether or not she will get it. The scene represents the essence of the research Gumperz conducted in London on multicultural gatekeeping encounters, in which he shows that culturally influenced ways of using language to signal meaning and intentions result in Southeast Asian speakers being underestimated and misjudged by British gatekeepers, with the result that Asians often don't get benefits they are entitled to or jobs for which they are qualified.

Gumperz (1982a: 175–179) illustrates this process in an exchange between a Pakistani teacher who has been unable to find permanent work in London and a white British counsellor whose job it is to help him. Gumperz shows that the audio-recorded interaction breaks down in part because of different expectations about what needs to be said in the interview/counselling session as well as different expectations regarding uses and interpretations of prosodic and paralinguistic features like rhythm and intonation. Such features – along with others that are linguistic (e.g. lexical choice) or extra-linguistic (e.g. eye gaze) – constitute what Gumperz calls 'contextualization cues'. These are all the ways speakers indicate and listeners interpret how speakers mean what they say. Expectations and assumptions about how to use these signals constitute the 'sociocultural knowledge' of the title of Gumperz' original essay, while listeners' interpretations of meaning and intentions, based on their own sociocultural knowledge, are the title's 'conversational inference'. In the interview/counselling session, for example, after a brief discussion about audio-recording, the staff counsellor uses a rise in pitch to mark a shift in focus to the session proper, thus initiating the speech activity, providing counselling. Instead of engaging in this activity – the reason he is there – the teacher produces talk that overlaps with the counsellor's, which suggests that he either fails to recognise, or disagrees with, the shift in speech activity, thereby missing her invitation to begin the counselling he came for. This seemingly trivial mismatch is just one of a mounting series, reflecting the inability not only to agree on how to initiate counselling but also to establish rhythmic synchrony and smooth turn-taking. The counsellor repeatedly uses indirectness to encourage the teacher to state his problem, without success. Gumperz draws on his own knowledge of Southeast Asian contextualization cues (he did fieldwork in India and co-authored a grammar of conversational Hindi–Urdu), as well as on the results of post-recording playback with other Pakistanis, to argue that the teacher's rhythm and intonation are signalling that he is seeking the counsellor's acknowledgement of 'the gravity of his situation before he goes on to give more detail' (1982a: 178). The result of these and other mismatches in uses and expectations of signalling is that the teacher does not receive needed support and the counsellor does not effectively do her job.

Such work by Gumperz, as well as by his students, starts from the belief that differences in how one uses and interprets contextualization cues contribute to, or aggravate, discrimination, social inequality, and cross-cultural stereotyping – and that by uncovering and explaining cultural differences and educating people about them, some such misunderstandings can be avoided or overcome, thereby decreasing the likelihood of unintentional discrimination or denial of resources. Of course, claiming that such differences contribute to social injustice does not imply that they are the only contributors. Clearly, discrimination, prejudice, and economic, as well as social, inequality play enormous roles. Nor does the hope that raising awareness about the role of such differences will be a starting point to overcome them and help undo the injustices to which they contribute imply that other contributing factors will thereby be miraculously erased.

Expansions and additions to interactional sociolinguistic theory

Gumperz' emphasis on the crucial role of contextualization cues in expressing and interpreting meaning has implications for linguistic theory. By bringing them into analytic focus he shows that features of language which linguists previously dismissed as 'marginal' should be seen as 'core'. Signalling how speakers mean what they say, what they think they are doing when they speak, is every bit as essential, for speakers and hearers, as knowing the

grammar and lexicon of a language. In that sense, interpreting contextualization cues that signal speech activity is akin to identifying what anthropologist Bateson ([1955]1972) referred to as 'frame', so it is not surprising that one of the most significant ways in which Gumperz' IS has been expanded and enriched is the theoretical concept of framing. Just as Gumperz argued that meaning cannot be gleaned in interaction except by reference to features previously dismissed by linguists as 'marginal', in Bateson's view, no utterance or act can be understood except by reference to a 'metamessage' that identifies the frame – that is, the nature of the interaction – such as whether a monkey biting another monkey is fighting or playing. Merging Bateson's and Gumperz' terminology, one can say that contextualization cues – the way the monkey executes the bite, or the way a person utters an insult – can be understood as sending metamessages that guide interpretation of messages, so a monkey knows that another monkey is playing and a person knows that a friend is teasing. As noted above, Bateson's concept of framing was elaborated and expanded by Goffman (1974, 1981), who was on the faculty at Berkeley at the same time as Gumperz for a number of overlapping years (1960–1968). Gumperz' notion of speech activity is closely related to that of frame; in later years, Gumperz made this connection explicit: 'Contextualization cues, along with other indexical signs, serve to retrieve the frames (in Goffman's sense of the term) that channel the interpretive process' (Prevignano and di Luzio 2003: 10). Further, they send metamessages regarding the relationships between participants, which relates to Goffman's (1981) notions of footing and alignment.

A frequently cited IS application and elaboration of frames theory is Tannen and Wallat's ([1987]1993) analysis of a paediatric examination/interview. The authors introduce a distinction between two types of frame: interactive frames and knowledge schemas. The paper demonstrates the power of frames theory to account for the discourse of a paediatrician who is examining a child in the presence of the child's mother. The doctor uses three distinct registers which identify her addressees: she speaks to the child in 'baby talk' or 'motherese'; she addresses the mother in a conversational register; and she uses a monotonic 'reporting register' to narrate the findings of her examination, presumably for the benefit of paediatric residents who will later view the videotape of the interaction. Tannen and Wallat demonstrate that while the notion of register helps identify whom the doctor is addressing, the notion of 'frame' is necessary to account for and distinguish what the doctor is doing when she speaks. For example, when she asks the mother for information relevant to the child's medical condition, her discourse is part of her examination. But when she answers the mother's question about an unrelated concern, the doctor must shift frames from examining the child to consulting with the mother: a cognitive burden that disrupts the examination, as the doctor attested during playback. The concept of knowledge schema explains why one such interruption occurred: the mother misinterpreted the 'noisy' breathing the child produced during the doctor's examination as indicating difficulty breathing, and this required the doctor to put the examination on hold to explain that the breathing was normal for a child with cerebral palsy. In other words, it was the mismatch in knowledge schemas about cerebral palsy that occasioned the sudden switch in frames.

The Tannen and Wallat study is not classic IS, insofar as sociocultural differences do not figure in it: both doctor and mother are white middle-class Americans. The question of whether ways of speaking are regarded as 'sociocultural' or individual is the focus of a paper co-authored by Gumperz and Tannen (1979) entitled 'Individual and social differences in language use'. Analysing examples of interaction in which miscommunication occurs, the authors posit an implicational hierarchy of levels on which signalling differences can occur, with level-1 differences, such as confusion about the referent 'here', characterised as

individual and level-4 differences characterised as social, as when an Indian English speaker using prosody and amplitude – speaking emphatically and loudly – to build up to his point is mistakenly heard by an American as having already made the point and is interrupted. Interestingly, an example of level-2 differences, uses of indirectness, in this paper illustrates individual differences, because the speakers are both white East Coast urban professional men. However, in *Conversational Style*, Tannen ([1984]2005) cites the same example in a study extending Gumperz' notion of social differences to Americans of different regional and ethnic backgrounds. She argues there that the men's contrasting uses of indirectness can be traced to their differing regional and ethnic backgrounds: one is Irish Catholic raised in Boston, the other East European Jewish raised in New York City. That a single example could in one study represent individual differences and in the other sociocultural differences highlights the difficulty of specifying the boundaries of these categories.

Tannen's notion of 'conversational style' expands on and adapts Gumperz' approach in another way, too: she folds Lakoff's (1973) notion of communicative style into Gumperz' of conversational inference, thereby accounting not only for the patterns by which speakers signal and listeners interpret how what is said is meant, but also explaining the 'logic' underlying and driving the stylistic choices associated with each style. Tannen posits, following Lakoff, that all speakers balance the needs to show involvement and to not impose, but some cultural styles place more emphasis on showing involvement (hence Tannen calls this style 'high involvement') while others place more on not imposing (hence 'high considerateness'). Seeing conversational style features as reflecting these overriding emphases – different ways of observing similar values and goals – shows that they are not random but patterned. Thus high-involvement style speakers might stand closer, speak more loudly, leave shorter pauses between turns and use 'cooperative overlap' – talking along to show enthusiastic listenership. Like Gumperz, Tannen assumes and explains the validity of differing styles. She argues that styles are influenced by a range of factors – not just broad cultural or ethnic identities but also regional background, religion, class, age, profession, gender, sexuality, and many other influences.

A liability associated with all research that addresses cultural patterns is the risk of being seen as 'stereotyping'. Does Tannen's finding that speakers of New York Jewish background were more likely to stand closer, speak more loudly, and talk along to show enthusiastic listenership amount to stereotyping New York Jews as aggressive? Our strong conviction is that the term 'stereotype' must be used with caution, and must not be confused with or applied to a pattern observed. A 'stereotype' is a pre-existing assumption based on hearsay that has been formed before encountering a person or interaction. A research finding based on observation is the opposite of a stereotype. A research finding which identifies a pattern that bears a resemblance to a stereotype is not a stereotype. The accusation that it reinforces a stereotype, on the other hand, must be taken seriously. In our view, Tannen's observations of the patterns she describes can help explain and overcome the stereotype. For example, Tannen showed that the use of cooperative overlap – speaking along to show enthusiasm – by speakers of East European Jewish background did not constitute interruption in interactions with those who shared a high-involvement style, because they did not stop if they had more to say. Cooperative overlap only led to interruption when it was mistaken as an attempt to take the floor. The interruption, in other words, was not the sole doing of the one who began speaking; rather, it was also the doing of the speaker who stopped mid-turn. This is a key point on many levels: first, the effect of a way of speaking in cross-style interaction may result not from a speaker's intention but rather from style difference between two speakers. Second, it attests to the IS principle that anything that happens in interaction always results from the interaction of all participants.

Gumperz' notion of conversational involvement is also elaborated in Tannen's *Talking Voices* ([1989]2007), where she argues that everyday conversation is made up of the same linguistic strategies that are artfully shaped and elaborated in literary discourse: repetition, dialogue, and details that create imagery. As Tannen explains in an introduction to the second edition (2007), her analysis of repetition, which makes up the first and by far the longest analytic chapter in the book, is synonymous with the phenomenon that is now routinely referred to as 'intertextuality' and is playing an increasingly central role in IS. Gordon (2009) further develops this focus by demonstrating the interrelation between intertextuality and framing in her study of the discourse of three families, each consisting of a mother, a father, and a child under age five. In this and related studies (Gordon 2004, 2006), she explores how and why family members repeat one another's words in everyday talk as well as the interactive effects of those repetitions. Importantly, Gordon (2009) demonstrates the function of repetition in creating and managing various forms of what Goffman (1974) refers to as 'laminations' of frames. In addition to showing the complex means by which speakers create different configurations of frames, she also shows how intertextuality interplays with framing to create the shared meanings that give each family its distinctive identity. For example, she demonstrates how a mother blends parenting and play frames in how she encourages her nearly three-year-old daughter to, for example, get into her car seat, speak politely, and get ready for naptime: the mother issues directives by using character names and other material from a storybook that she often reads to the little girl, thus accomplishing both parenting and play. Gordon also suggests that interactions such as these construct aspects of the family's identity (e.g. as centring around literacy). In the next section, we describe how select studies in IS have explored discourse as related to identities pertaining to gender and sexuality.

The theoretical framework of IS has thus expanded and evolved in the years since Gumperz first devised what he called his theory of conversational inference, and the approach has been applied to ever-expanding domains of interaction. With this overview of IS as a foundation, we turn now to the topic of this Handbook, describing how IS has been used to explore how identities related to gender and sexuality are represented and constructed in discourse.

Language, gender, and sexuality

Cross-gender communication as cross-cultural communication

A particularly influential as well as early application of IS to gender and discourse is the chapter by Maltz and Borker in *Language and Social Identity* (1982). Spending time with Gumperz at the University of California, Berkeley during the key years when he was developing IS, the authors, both anthropologists, concluded that Gumperz' framework of cross-cultural miscommunication could account for a range of findings in the then-nascent but about to burgeon field of gender and language. They recap patterns identified in the existing literature regarding how American girls and boys, and women and men, tend to use language. They then cite studies, such as those by Goodwin (1980) and Lever (1976), of children's play to support the view that boys and girls grow up in what can be seen as different cultures in the sense that they tend to play in sex-separate groups and to be treated differently. Maltz and Borker then suggest that the differences in how women and men use language can be traced to the gender-inflected sociolinguistic subcultures in which they are socialised. In other words, they learn to use and interpret contextualization cues

differently, and differently conceptualise certain speech activities. Brief, simple examples are Hirschman's ([1973]1994) observation that women tend to use more minimal responses, especially 'mm hmm', and Fishman's (1978: 402) that women are more likely to utter such feedback throughout another's talk rather than at a turn's end. Maltz and Borker hypothesise that women often use these minimal responses to indicate that they're listening, whereas men may use them to indicate agreement, or at least, 'I follow your argument so far'. Therefore, the authors argue, women may use more of them because they are listening more often than men are agreeing. Furthermore, a man may get the impression that a woman has been agreeing when she has simply been listening, and a woman may get the impression that a man isn't listening when he has been listening but doesn't agree. They note, moreover, that these impressions fit in with the larger complaints that members of each subculture tend to make of the other: women often complain that men do not listen, and men often complain that women are unpredictable. They thus apply Gumperz' insight that ill effects in interaction may result from the differing expectations and uses of contextualization cues rather than from ill intentions. It is important to emphasise here that this does not imply that no one ever has ill intentions, only that the impression of ill intentions in some instances may be the unintended result of these differences. This brief article was significant in demonstrating the applicability of IS theory and method to contexts beyond those Gumperz addressed, and was influential in its specific extension of IS to language and gender.

Maltz and Borker's article became the basis for Tannen's application of Gumperz' framework to communication between women and men in her general-audience book *You Just Don't Understand* (1990). Around the time that Tannen was working on it, she took part in a study of children's dyadic conversations with their best friends that was spearheaded by Bruce Dorval, who video-recorded the children's conversations in his office. Tannen noticed that at every age, the girls looked directly at each other and maintained that face-to-face gaze whereas at every age the boys sat at angles or parallel and looked around the room. These observations, recapped in a chapter of *You Just Don't Understand*, correspond to Maltz and Borker's interpretation of Hirschman's and Fishman's findings: women often get the impression that men are not listening because they are not maintaining gaze, and men may feel wrongly accused of not listening when they were. (See Tannen 1994a for analyses, based on these and other findings, written for academic audiences.)

Tannen's (1994b) next book, *Talking from 9 to 5*, applies IS method as well as theory in that it is based on extended ethnographic observation and the recording of naturally occurring interaction. Tannen worked with two large corporations, one in California and one in New York State, to identify four or five managers who carried or wore audio recorders and recorded everything they felt comfortable recording at work for a week. After they had recorded, she shadowed them and interviewed their peers, superiors, and subordinates. Tannen documents how the women in her study are caught in what Lakoff (1975) identified as a 'double bind' confronting all women in positions of authority. (The concept of double bind, which traces to Bateson, is a no-win situation in which someone is faced with two requirements, but anything they do to fulfil one violates the other. For women in authority, anything they do to fulfil the expectations that a good woman is, for example, diffident and self-effacing, violates the expectations that a person in authority be confident and assertive. If they talk in ways expected of women, they are liked but seen as lacking confidence and even competence. If they talk in ways expected of people in authority, they are seen as too aggressive.) A condensation of this book appears as an article in the *Harvard Business Review* (Tannen 1995). For further discussion of this double bind see also Appleby, this volume.

Gender and talk at home and at work

As the preceding sections illustrate, there are many language and gender studies that take an IS approach to examine interactions at home and in the workplace. (Workplace studies have been particularly numerous, including those by Angouri, Marra, and Dawson, and by Schnurr and Omar, this volume, and the large body of work by Holmes and her collaborators (e.g. Holmes and Marra 2004).) A case study by Kendall (2003) is unique and particularly revealing in comparing a woman's discourse across these two domains. Using a framing approach, Kendall explores the contrasting ways that the woman, Elaine, constructs authority at home, as a parent to her ten-year old daughter, and at work, as the manager of two women subordinates, where Kendall documents how the woman manages the double bind. Drawing on Goffman's (1967: 83) notions of deference and demeanour as well as Davies and Harre's (1990) positioning theory, Kendall shows that Elaine creates a 'benevolent demeanour of authority' at work by issuing directives to her subordinates in face-saving ways, positioning them as equals who will engage in a joint activity, such as by using 'let's'. Strikingly, Kendall notes that Elaine 'draws on mitigating strategies that evoke the qualities associated with sociocultural concepts of "mother"; however, she does not use these strategies to the same extent to "do" her identity as a mother' (p. 13). At home, Elaine creates a demeanour of 'explicit authority' by, for example, issuing unmitigated directives in imperative form to her daughter during dinnertime, such as, 'Just spoon in that, and stir it around' (p. 608). In a related study, Kendall (2008) zooms in on the dinnertime interactions, demonstrating how Elaine and her husband create gendered identities through the number and kinds of positions they take up in different frames. Elaine accomplishes many tasks, such as monitoring their daughter's etiquette and behaviour, and managing dinner preparation and clean-up, while her husband mainly positions himself as family comedian. Through this unequal division of labour, as well as the gendered nature of their different tasks, the adults create gendered parental identities. Simultaneously, Kendall shows, they construct other social identities (e.g. authority on cooking, child's teacher); she thus demonstrates that gendered identities are multifaceted, and intersect with other aspects of identity.

Kendall also analysed conversations between parents as part of the larger study of family interaction of which Gordon, cited above, is also a part. (See Tannen, Kendall, and Gordon 2007 for a detailed description.) The design of this study is modelled on the one Tannen developed for the research behind *Talking from 9 to 5*. Parents in dual-income, roughly middle-class American families (all of whom were white and had opposite-sex partners) carried or wore digital audio recorders over the course of approximately one week, recording as much as they felt comfortable doing at work and at home. Post-recording, they were shadowed by a member of the research team for at least one day (Kendall and Gordon both observed), and participated in playback with the researchers. Kendall (2007) used these recordings and transcriptions to explore how members of two couples create gendered positions in conflicting discourses (or ideologies) of work and family: on one hand, the traditional ideology by which women are primary caregivers and men are breadwinners and on the other, the feminist discourse by which women and men share equally the roles of primary caregiver and breadwinner. The couples whose discourse she analysed espoused the feminist discourse: it was important to them that both worked and both spent time with their child as primary caregiver. However, their everyday interactions and conversations often positioned them within the traditional discourse. For example, one mother is positioned as primary caregiver when she overrules directives issued by her husband to their child during potty-training; elsewhere, in a conversation with her friends, she describes her work outside

the home as a chance to be 'be stimulated' and her husband's as necessary for the family 'to survive', thus positioning him as breadwinner.

Gordon has also explored gender in the discourse of these families. For example, extending theorising by Ochs (1993), Gordon (2007) examines the acts and stances the same mother performs in an interaction wherein her brother (the child's uncle) explains to the couple how their daughter misbehaved while he babysat her. Gordon shows that the mother performs acts and takes up stances that are socioculturally linked to the identities of 'parent', 'woman', and particularly 'mother', by requesting details about her daughter's day; providing details about her child's life in response to the report; assessing her daughter's and her brother's depicted behaviours; and accounting for her daughter's misbehaviour.

The topic of language and gender has also been explored by scholars drawing on IS in other contexts, both personal/social and workplace/institutional, and in various cultures. We mention only a sampling here. Language and gender has been explored in such interpersonal interactions as talk among adult women friends in Greece (Georgakopoulou 2005) and Germany (Günthner 1997; Kotthoff 2000); among college fraternity men in the US (Kiesling 2001); among US American and Chinese preschool children (Kyrtzits and Guo 2001); between members of a mixed-gender pair of Japanese college friends (Itakura 2015); and between a pair of preschool-aged British girls engaged in pretend play (Cook-Gumperz 1995). Workplace/institutional contexts wherein language and gender are examined include Brazilian all-female police stations and feminist crisis centres (Ostermann 2003); psychiatric interviews in Brazil (Ribeiro 2002); discourse among men and women in the US Air Force (Disler 2008); employment interviews of female engineering students in New Zealand (Reissner-Roubicek 2012); German-language counselling/advising conversations among German advisors and Chinese research scientists seeking guidance (Günthner 1992); interactions among employees at an American radio network (Kendall 2004); conversations among members of an all-women management team in the UK (Baxter 2014); everyday discourse in diverse types of New Zealand workplaces (e.g. Holmes 2006); and in multinational companies situated in Europe (Angouri 2018). Gendered styles of language use and identity construction have also been considered through the lens of IS in contexts beyond work and home, though less frequently, including in news, entertainment, and social media contexts, such as in televised debates (Kotthoff 1997), reality TV (Gordon 2015), online discussion boards (Gordon and İkozoglu 2017), and online product reviews (Vásquez and China 2019). As indicated by these studies, as well as those briefly summarised above and many we have not specifically cited, IS has proved a frequent and fruitful source of insight into gendered patterns of interaction. Language and sexuality is a newer field and therefore includes fewer IS studies. Hence the next and last section is brief, but will give a sense of work that has been done and of work that might be done in the future.

Language and sexuality

There is a limited body of research in interactional sociolinguistics that focuses on sexuality, as compared to gender. Kiesling's (2001) work on fraternity men's discourse, and Georgakopoulou's (2005) on the discourse of women friends both address heterosexuality as relevant to the construction of gendered identities in their data. Wang (2020) draws on IS to examine the construction of racialised sexuality in online text-based communication. Seals' (this volume) analysis of a stand-up routine also addresses sexuality. To date,

however, more research on language and sexuality has been conducted by scholars taking kindred context-bound approaches to the analysis of interaction, such as Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) sociocultural linguistic approach to the study of identity construction. For instance, Wagner (2010) examines the discourse of lesbian families in the US; Hall (e.g. Hall and O'Donovan 1996) explores language use by Hindi-speaking hijras (identified by anthropologists as members of a 'third gender') in northern India, and Gaudio (2009) studies the discourse of feminine men in a Hausa-speaking Islamic city of northern Nigeria. Collections have emerged that use qualitative sociolinguistic and anthropological linguistic perspectives to investigate connections between gender and sexuality in language use among people who self-identify as queer, transgender, or non-binary (e.g. Zimman, Davis, and Raclaw 2014). We look forward to future studies applying theories of conversational inference, discourse strategies, and framing and positioning, as developed in IS, to the study of language and sexuality.

Conclusion

We have tried in this essay to provide an overview of 'interactional sociolinguistics' from its inception in the pioneering work of Gumperz to the rich and expansive body of work now commonly referred to by the term, as it is now used to characterise a wide range of context-sensitive microanalysis of interaction. In revisiting the roots and development of the approach, we have highlighted not only how it has blossomed over the years, but also the potential and promise it holds for scholars who seek a qualitative, interpretive method to explore language, gender, and sexuality.

Notes

- 1 Each author has written a lengthy essay focusing on IS which includes information relevant to this joint essay. Gordon's (2011) is an introduction to Gumperz's academic biography, the motivations that contributed to his development of IS, and key research trajectories in the areas of his research. Tannen's (2004) introduces the terms and concepts that characterise the theories and methods of IS, then presents sample analyses to illustrate their application.
- 2 Tannen actually helped Gumperz write this paper, as well as two others that he drew on for *Discourse Strategies*. When she was a graduate student in linguistics at the University of California, Berkeley, Tannen was hired by Gumperz full time for a term to help him write this paper and another entitled 'The conversational analysis of interethnic communication' (Gumperz 1978). She later helped him write 'The sociolinguistic basis of speech act theory' (Gumperz 1981), parts of which he adapted for inclusion in Chapter 8. Finally, Chapter 6, 'Contextualization conventions', draws heavily from the paper Gumperz and Tannen (1979) co-authored entitled 'Individual and social differences in language use'. The collaboration is acknowledged in the notes to each of these publications.

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