

# Sociolinguistics Soziolinguistik

An International Handbook of the Science  
of Language and Society  
Ein internationales Handbuch zur Wissenschaft  
von Sprache und Gesellschaft

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## 8. Interactional Sociolinguistics/Interaktionale Soziolinguistik

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### 1. Introduction: What is interactional sociolinguistics?

Interactional sociolinguistics (IS) is a type of qualitative analysis that sits at the intersection of linguistics, anthropology, and sociology. Rooted in the theoretical and methodological approaches developed by John Gumperz, work in this area typically entails case-study microanalysis of the language of real interaction in the context of social relationships. It is a tenet of IS that language can only be studied in this context, and further that the language of interaction is constitutive of social relationships. The goal of IS, then, is no less than accounting for the communication of meaning through language use. The word "use" is crucial. IS sees meaning not as inherent in words, but rather as jointly created by speakers and listeners in the act of using language to accomplish interactive goals.

### 2. Theoretical underpinnings and methods

According to his own account (Gumperz 1992a, 1999), Gumperz' early research was based on field work done in India, Norway, and Central Europe during the 1950's and 1960's. The methodological approach and theoretical framework that became the foundation for IS was developed in the 1970's, culminating in his 1982 book *Discourse Strategies*. In subsequent essays (e.g. Gumperz 1992b, 1996) he elaborated and explained this approach and updated his terminology in keeping with developments in the field, but the underlying tenets and concepts remain constant. A collection of essays edited by Gumperz (1982b) highlights a fundamental aspect of IS that is also found in the work of many of Gumperz' students and colleagues: the argument that differences in linguistic phenomena partially account for, or aggravate, social inequality, discrimination, and cross-cultural stereotyping. For

example, Gumperz demonstrates that systematically different ways of using language to create and interpret meaning contribute to employment discrimination against London residents who were born and raised in Pakistan, India or the West Indies. By analyzing interaction in employment interviews, Gumperz follows Erickson's (1975) focus on the linguistic basis of discrimination in "gatekeeping encounters": speech events in which a member of a minority community requires the approval of a majority-community member to advance professionally or receive a societal benefit. It is the job of the interviewer to assess the interviewee's qualifications for the position or the benefit, but the assessment is made based on linguistic performance. Thus Erickson and Shultz (1982) argue that differences in conventions for signalling listenership between Americans of European and of African descent result in European-American school counselors "talking down" to African-American students. In a similar vein, Tannen (1981, 1984) analyzes the role of what she calls conversational style in the perception and stereotyping of New York Jewish speakers as "pushy" and aggressive. Maltz and Borker (1982) and Tannen (1990, 1993) use Gumperz' model of cross-cultural communication to elucidate male/female communication. In all these studies, close attention to miscommunication based on ways of speaking serves the purpose of explaining social phenomena. But analysis of miscommunication is also a heuristic device serving the broader goal of IS to explain how meaning is communicated in verbal interaction. Miscommunication makes visible elements of communicative practice that go unnoticed when communication proceeds without perceptible trouble.

Whereas the grammatical sentence is the unit of analysis in formal linguistics, for IS the basic unit of analysis is a smaller entity: an utterance alternately called a "breath group," "intonation unit," "idea unit," or "information unit," characterized by an identifiable intonational contour and typically bounded by falling or otherwise phrase-final intonation, a pause, and/or a discourse marker such as "but" or "and." The focus of analysis is usually a spoken interchange (audio- or video-taped and subsequently

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transcribed) involving two or more interac-  
tants. Context is key to meaning in IS. Con-  
text, however, is conceptualized not as some-  
thing outside discourse that impinges on it  
but rather as created by discourse. In this  
view, speakers create context by means of lin-  
guistic cues. Furthermore, verbal interaction  
(or "discursive practice") proceeds not ac-  
cording to rules but rather by application of  
systematic strategies or principles. Crucially,  
meaning is not the single-handed creation of  
one speaker but the jointly-constructed crea-  
tion of both interactants; indeed, listening  
and speaking are inextricably intertwined  
(Erickson 1986).

### 3. Key terms and concepts

For Gumperz, all meaning is "situated inter-  
pretation." The conception of meaning as  
an interpretive process is fundamental to his  
notion of conversational inference: the ac-  
tive process by which a listener develops an  
ongoing interpretation of a speaker's mean-  
ing. This interpretive process is continually  
developing and re-evaluated as discourse  
progresses. Shared contextualization con-  
ventions enable a listener not only to inter-  
pret what has been said but also to predict  
what is likely to be said. In other words, at  
any moment in an interaction, a listener uses  
linguistic signals as guideposts to where the  
speaker is heading in the discourse. More-  
over, the ability to make such predictions is  
necessary to participate successfully in a  
verbal exchange. This developing thread of  
meaning that a listener must be able to dis-  
cern, follow, and predict is called thematic  
progression. (Gumperz 1999 credits lan-  
guage philosopher H. P. Grice's [1989] con-  
cept of conversational cooperation as a pre-  
cursor to his own understanding of how  
speakers and hearers work together to devel-  
op and interpret thematic progression.) The  
dual process of interpretation and predic-  
tion is also made possible by co-occurrence  
expectations. For example, members of a  
speech community know that a listing inton-  
ation presages more items to come in a list,  
or that a raised voice indicates anger – an  
emotion that will guide the listener in deter-  
mining how to understand the ensuing dis-  
course. Conversational inference is an on-  
going process of interpreting meaning which  
resides not only in the words spoken but in  
every aspect of how they are spoken. It de-  
pends crucially on culturally-shared and con-

textually-sensitive presuppositions. The  
signposts that signal meaning, create coher-  
ence (that is, show the relationship among  
ideas), and guide interpretation are contex-  
tualization cues, defined by Gumperz (1999,  
461) as "any verbal sign which when pro-  
cessed in co-occurrence with symbolic  
grammatical and lexical signs serves to con-  
struct the contextual ground for situated in-  
terpretation, and thereby affects how consti-  
tuent messages are understood." In this  
framework, aspects of language which were  
previously devalued – dismissed as "margi-  
nal" – become the focus of analysis; in other  
words, they become "core." Key among con-  
textualization cues, as specified by Gumperz  
1992b, 231, are: 1) prosody (including inton-  
ation, stress, and shifts in pitch and loud-  
ness); 2) paralinguistic cues (including rate  
of speech, rhythm, pausing, hesitation, tone  
of voice, latching, and overlapping); 3) the  
code- or style-switching that was a major  
contribution of Gumperz' early work (Blom  
and Gumperz 1972) – that is, the shifting be-  
tween two languages, dialects or speech  
styles; and 4) choice of particular lexical  
forms or culturally recognizable formulaic  
expressions.

A central concept that both underlies the  
theoretical and methodological basis of IS  
and also illustrates its interdisciplinary na-  
ture is framing. Anthropologist Gregory  
Bateson [1955]1972 introduced the notion of  
frame to capture a fundamental aspect of  
meaning in interaction: No utterance or  
symbolic act can be understood except by  
reference to a "metamessage" that identifies  
the character of the interaction. Bateson ex-  
plains that while watching monkeys playing  
in their cage at the zoo, he wondered how a  
monkey at play was able to understand a  
bite – an aggressive action – as a friendly  
move. Bateson concluded that a biting mon-  
key sends not only a message – the bite – but  
also, at the same time, a metamessage "this  
is play." One might say that the metamess-  
age is like an instruction guide to how the  
message is to be interpreted; that is the sense  
in which it frames the message. A theory of  
framing as key to human interaction was  
elaborated by sociologist Erving Goffman  
(1974). Both Bateson and Goffman were  
concerned with the creation of meaning in  
human interaction in general, not exclusi-  
vely or even primarily in language, though  
in his last book Goffman (1981) began to  
focus his analysis of framing on the parti-

cularities of talk. Insofar as speech is an essential element of human interaction, the concept of framing is as crucial to understanding meaning in language as it is to other types of meaning. Parallel to the notion of frame is Gumperz' speech activity: the goal-oriented character of an interaction, by reference to which – and only by reference to which – an utterance can be interpreted. The direct influence on Gumperz is more specifically Dell Hymes' (1974) pioneering work in the ethnography of communication, especially his notion of a speech event, the larger context in which a speech activity takes place. Finally, Gumperz (1999, 456) credits ethnomethodologist Harold Garfinkel (1967) with turning attention to the organization of everyday behavior and to the "practical reasoning" by which interactants interpret each other's moves. Given these overarching theoretical conceptions and diverse influences, Gumperz pioneered the sociolinguistic microanalysis of verbal interaction as a way of discovering and documenting how meaning is exchanged, created, and interpreted through language.

#### 4. Representative studies

##### 4.1. Gumperz' analysis of interethnic communication in the UK

Gumperz laid the cornerstone for his IS approach in field work conducted in Great Britain (primarily London) examining interethnic communication among speakers of different varieties of English in workplace settings, especially in gatekeeping encounters such as employment interviews or conversations between teachers and prospective students in training courses. For example, in a selection interview for applicants to a British government-funded skills training program Gumperz (1999, 466) shows that an applicant of South Asian origin fails to recognize the implicit invitation to elaborate on the answers he has already provided on his written application. In the transcription, R is the Interviewer, A the applicant, and C the course instructor who is also present at the interview. (An asterisk marks accented words.)

- 1 R: And you've put here, that you want to apply for that course because there are more jobs ... the \*trade.
- 2 A: Yeah (low).

- 3 R: So perhaps you could explain to Mr. C \*apart from \*that reason, \*why else you want to apply for \*electrical work.
- 4 A: I think I like ... this job in my-, as a profession.
- 5 C: And \*why do you think you'll \*like it?
- 6 A: Why?
- 7 C: Could you explain to me why?
- 8 A: Why do I like it? I think it is more job \*prospect.

Throughout this interchange, the interviewer and course instructor rely on culturally-shared expectations for what kind of information should be exchanged in an interview, and signal to the applicant what type of response they are looking for through selective accenting of lexical items. Thus in (1) the emphasis on "trade" is an invitation to the applicant to bolster his chances for admission by enumerating and explaining his qualifications, experience and interest as they relate specifically to electrical work. In lines 3, 5 and 7, the interviewers repeat and escalate their efforts to invite self-promotion on the part of the applicant, still relying on verbal accenting to call attention to the relevant words ("apart from that, why else"). But the South Asian applicant is not alert to the British English speakers' contextualization cues – their use of pitch and amplitude to draw attention to key words in their questions and statements. Furthermore, he does not share their expectations for interviews. In keeping with his own sociocultural norms, he regards self-promotion as inappropriate in this context, since it risks the impression of excessive assertiveness. The applicant eventually volunteers that he had completely wired his own house in a way that passed inspection, but even when this fact emerges, he de-emphasizes rather than highlighting (let alone exaggerating) the skill, knowledge and interest that this required. Gumperz' microanalysis of this tape-recorded and transcribed interaction is bolstered and deepened by his knowledge of the grammar and interactional norms of both South Asian and British speakers to demonstrate that the outcome of this gatekeeping encounter was "interactively produced."

Another classic study demonstrates the notion of contextualization cues; their central role in affecting interactional outcomes;

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and the inextricability of real-world issues such as job discrimination, on the one hand, and understanding how meaning is created in interaction on the other. In this study, Gumperz (1982a) uses the tape-recording of real interaction to investigate charges and counter-charges among servers and customers in the employee cafeteria of a British airport, which had recently hired servers of South Asian background. The cafeteria customers complained of rudeness on the part of the South Asian servers, who complained in turn that they were victims of prejudice and discrimination. By audiotaping interactions between servers and customers, Gumperz identified a small contrast in the use of paralinguistic features that accounted in part for both complaints. Customers who selected a meat course were given the option of whether or not they wanted gravy on their meat. Both British and South Asian servers made this offer by uttering a single word, "gravy." But the British servers said this word with rising intonation while the South Asian servers said it with falling intonation. These contrasting intonational patterns resulted in very different interpretations: The rising-intonation contour was heard as a question, and consequently a polite offer: "Would you like gravy?" while the falling-intonation contour was heard as a statement, and consequently redundant and rude: "This is gravy." When the audiotape was played for the cafeteria employees themselves, they saw it as a self-evident example of discrimination because they were so obviously saying "the same thing." When their supervisor and English teacher explained how the different intonation pattern resulted in different "meaning," the South Asian servers understood the reactions which had previously seemed to them incomprehensible, and the supervisors learned that for them the falling intonation was simply the normal way of asking a question in that context. Because the use of intonational contours as a way of signalling politeness is conventionalized, it is obvious to speakers of British English and invisible to South Asian speakers of a different variety of English. This example, then, illustrates both that contextualization cues such as pitch and intonation are crucial to signalling and interpreting the meaning of words spoken, and also that divergent contextualization conventions contribute to the perception and the reality of social inequality

and employment discrimination. It also illustrates the method by which key segments of an audiotaped interaction are replayed to participants in order to elicit their comments, which become another type of data to be analyzed.

#### 4.2. Sociolinguistic subcultures in American conversation

An IS approach to communication among speakers of divergent varieties of English has been applied to the conversations of American-born conversationalists of different ethnic and regional backgrounds. Tannen (1984) examines a two-and-a-half hour conversation that took place at a Thanksgiving dinner among six friends. On the basis of microanalysis of the audiotaped and transcribed conversation, and bolstered by the subsequent comments made by participants upon listening to segments of the tape recording, Tannen describes two contrasting conversational styles. Three speakers of East European Jewish background who grew up in New York City use a high-involvement style by which a speaker's prime responsibility is to demonstrate enthusiasm, interest, and conversational involvement. Some of the linguistic features that characterize this style include faster rate of speech; shorter or imperceptible inter-turn pauses (since silence is avoided as evidence of lack of rapport); cooperative overlap and participatory listenership; expressive phonology and extreme shifts in pitch and amplitude; more use of personal topics and narratives of personal experience; abrupt topic shifts; and persistence in raising a new topic if it is not immediately picked up. The other three participants (two were raised Catholic in Southern California, a third is British) use a high-considerateness style. It was not possible, however, based on this study, to describe this style because the linguistic features of high-involvement style tended to interfere with the discursive practices of high-considerateness features. The way this happens, and the theoretical framework by which the pattern is analyzed, can be demonstrated with reference to interruption – a linguistic phenomenon that has received a great deal of attention and analysis (eg James and Clarke 1993) – which is inseparable from the related patterns of pitch, amplitude, pacing, and conversational rhythm. Bennett (1981) points out that whereas overlap – two voices speaking at once – is an ob-

servable, descriptive linguistic category, interruption is an interpretive category that implies a violation of speaking rights. Tannen (1984) describes segments of interaction in which high-considerateness speakers perceive themselves to be interrupted by high-involvement speakers, but the overlap was not intended to be floor-stealing but rather to be an encouraging show of interest and attentive listening. In other words, for high-involvement speakers, talking-along is often not interruption but rather cooperative overlap, a form of participatory listenership. But for those who believe only one voice should be heard at a time, talking-along is always interruptive. The contrast becomes clear when segments of conversation in which three high-involvement speakers participated are contrasted with segments of cross-style interaction. (In this study, as in many IS studies, the researcher is also a participant.) For example, in the following exchange (1984, 69) Deborah's fast-paced questions that come as overlaps create stumbling, confusion, and a slowing of pace on the part of a high-considerateness speaker, David. David, a painter and sign-language interpreter, has been explaining regional variation in signs, and has just demonstrated a sign for Christmas that derives from Christmas decorations. Deborah overlaps to ask a question:

- (1) David: So: and this is the one that's Bèrkeley. This is the Bèrkeley ... sign for ... for [ Christmas.  
 (2) Deborah: those . . those um correspondences? or do- when you learn the signs, /does/ somebody tells you.  
 (3) David: Oh you mean [ watching it? like  
 (4) Deborah: Cause I can imagine knowing that sign, ... and not ... figuring out that it had anything to do with the decorations.  
 ...  
 (5) David: No. Y you know that it has to do with the decorations.

Deborah's question in line 2 not only comes as an overlap but also abruptly changes the focus from sign language in general to David as a sign-language learner in particular. Tannen argues that David is caught off guard by a range of features that characterize this question as high-involvement: not only the overlap but also the rhythm and fast pacing and the shift of focus to David personally. (A few turns later he asks explicitly

"You talking about me, or a deaf person," to which Deborah responds with increasingly fast pace and clipped syntax, "You. You.") The result is that David's pace slows and he becomes inarticulate, whereas Deborah's pace quickens and she continues to overlap as she hastens to facilitate his reply by elaborating on her question. It would be easy for an analyst to conclude that David is a conversational victim of Deborah's verbal aggressiveness. In short, she interrupted him. But Tannen contrasts this interchange (and others like it) with segments of the same conversation in which a high-involvement listener's overlaps have the effect of encouraging rather than confusing a speaker – that is, a high-involvement style speaker. In the following example (1984, 64) Deborah's "machine-gun questions" to Peter and Steve are very similar to those she used with David, but the effect is very different. Again, the conversation begins as a general discussion of a phenomenon, the influence of television on children. Steve remarks that he believes the influence to be negative. Deborah then uses fast pacing (in this case a latch – turn-taking with no perceptible interturn pause – rather than an overlap) to shift focus abruptly to Steve's (and his brother Peter's) personal experience. The question causes no disruption in the rhythm of Steve's speech. He seamlessly finishes his

thought and then goes on to answer the question. Because Steve and Peter are brothers and the question addresses them both, they both respond. In the course of answering Deborah's first question, Peter mentions that they had a television in "the quonset huts," thereby revealing that he and his brother lived for a time in the odd-looking temporary housing that was built for returning veterans after World War II:

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- (1) Steve: I think it's basically done ... damage to children.  
... That what good it's done is ... outweighed by ...  
the damage.]
- (2) Deborah: [Did you two grow up with television?
- (3) Peter: V3ry little. We had a TV [ in the Quonset
- (4) Deborah: [How old were you when your  
parents got it?]
- (5) Steve: [We had a TV but we didn't watch it all  
the time: ... We were v3ry young. I was four when my  
parents got a TV.]
- (6) Deborah: [You were four?

Key evidence of the logic of high-involve-  
ment style lies in line 5. First, Steve's reply  
(like Peter's in line 3) shows no evidence of  
the hesitation, false starts, and rhythmic dis-  
ruption that characterized David's reaction  
to Deborah's machine-gun questions. Fur-  
thermore, Steve begins line 5 by answering  
Deborah's first question (line 2: Did you two  
grow up with television?) by saying "We had  
a TV but we didn't watch it all the time."  
Then he proceeds with only a slight pause to  
answer her second question (line 4: How old  
were you when your parents got it?) by say-  
ing "I was four when my parents got a TV."  
Each section of Steve's line 5 is syntactically  
and lexically tied to a separate machine-gun  
question. Steve begins "We had a TV" in  
reply to the question "Did you two ...". Then  
he switches to the first person "I was four ..."  
in reply to the question "How old were  
you ...?" These and many other examples il-  
lustrate that the same conversational strategy  
(a fast-paced question that comes as a latch  
or overlap and abruptly switches focus to the  
speaker personally) has a positive effect - cre-  
ating shared rhythm and expressing enthusi-  
astic listenership and interest - when used  
with a speaker who shares a high-involve-  
ment style, but a negative effect (disrupting  
rhythm and causing dysfluency) when used  
with a high-considerateness speaker. In all in-  
stances shown, overlap (with attendant pitch,  
rhythm and syntax) is intended as a cooper-  
ative device; in one instance it is received as  
such but in the other it becomes a disruptive  
device - an interruption. Crucially, the effect  
of the overlap is the creation not only of one  
person - the overlapper - but rather of both  
participants. Similarly, the interpretation of  
the overlap as an interruption may accurately  
describe the impression made on the speaker  
without accurately describing the intention  
of the listener - nor any inherent "meaning"  
of the linguistic behavior. Finally, Tannen  
notes that her analysis elucidates both the

process of conversational style as a system for  
signalling interactive meaning as well as the  
consequences of conversational style as a  
source of systematic miscommunication that  
accounts in part for the stereotyping of New  
York speakers in general, and New York Jew-  
ish speakers in particular, as "pushy" and  
"aggressive."

Another study of subculturally-identifi-  
able discourse style in conversation that  
also focuses on the conversation of East  
European Jewish Americans is Schiffrrin's  
(1984) analysis of "Jewish argument as so-  
ciability." Just as Tannen shows that an os-  
tensibly non-cooperative strategy, conversa-  
tional overlap, can have a cooperative intent  
and effect, Schiffrrin demonstrates that  
for the speakers in her study, lower-middle-  
class Jewish Philadelphians, repeated dis-  
agreement and competitive argument ac-  
tually display the participants' solidarity  
and reinforce their intimacy. Schiffrrin  
examines a series of conversations that took  
place during sociolinguistic interviews she  
conducted with a married couple, Zelda and  
Henry. In the following brief excerpt (321),  
the topic of discussion is whether it is ap-  
propriate to prefer some relatives over  
others. (It is not a coincidence, though  
neither is it a focus of Schiffrrin's analysis,  
that many of the disagreements come as  
overlaps.)

- Henry: But don't they have a different attitude  
toward the other?
- Zelda: [Y- You're wrong Henry.
- Henry: Think about it.
- Zelda: No. You're wrong. Y- I- look I have . . .  
the- I have uh f:four or five cousins  
from one aunt! And I like my -
- Henry: you have-
- Zelda: = cousin, one of them better than the  
[others! And ] that's how it is: Yeh! =
- Henry: [You do- you do-] [You do?]

After several more lines of dynamic disagreement in this vein, Zelda suddenly says (overlapping Henry's prior turn), "Boy you need a shave so bad!" and Henry agrees with her criticism by saying (overlapping the end of her statement) "I know I do. I like to take a shave every four days!" Thus, Schifffrin shows, the interchange closes with a mixture of humor, intimacy (a comment on bodily matters), and solidarity created through rather than in spite of competitive disagreement (and, one might add, shared conversational rhythm and cooperative use of overlap).

#### 4.3. Framing

In analyzing the excerpt shown above, Schifffrin describes Zelda's sudden reference to Henry needing a shave as a frame break that glosses the preceding argument as non-serious. When disagreeing about attitudes toward cousins, Henry and Zelda are non-aligned, but when they agree that Henry needs a shave, they are aligned. Thus Schifffrin draws on Goffman's (1974) notion of framing both to describe the shifting participant structures by which Henry and Zelda display alignments and also to identify the frame by which their argument is to be interpreted as non-serious (in Bateson's terms, framed by a metamessage "this is play").

In another study based on the same set of sociolinguistic interviews, Schifffrin uses and develops the concept of framing to identify a conversational move she calls "speaking for another" - that is, voicing something about someone else, in that person's presence, which only that person is in a position to know. In an interchange among Zelda, Henry, and their neighbor and friend Irene, Schifffrin shows that speakers use "speaking for another" to accomplish frame shifts by which participants are realigned with respect to each other, to the sociolinguistic interviewer, and to their gender identities. In other words, macro-level relationships are evidenced and created by micro-level linguistic strategies that align (a subtype of framing) participants in relation to each other. For example, when Irene rejects Henry's offer of a piece of candy, Zelda speaks for her in explaining, "She's on a diet." Both Henry and Zelda speak for Irene (who is significantly younger than they), but Zelda's realignments are supportive and integrative: by speaking for her, Zelda protects

Irene from Henry's potential criticism. In contrast, Henry's realignments are judgmental, challenging, and divisive: They align him with the interviewer in opposition to Irene, negatively evaluate her behavior, and prompt her to reveal potentially compromising information, although he too takes a protective stance toward her. For example, in answer to the interviewer's (Schifffrin's) question about whether she'd be more likely to discuss a problem with a friend or a family member, Irene says "I'm not that family oriented. Like they are." Overlapping the last phrase, Henry says, "She should be. She's got a nice family." With this comment, Henry realigns himself with respect to his interlocutors not only by criticizing Irene's response but also by addressing his assessment to the interviewer rather than to her. Immediately after, Zelda intervenes to align herself with Irene by speaking for her: "Well she really- wait a minute she doesn't have sisters." Henry overlaps Zelda to clarify: "She's got lovely children," and Irene overlaps "sisters" to agree with Zelda, "I'm not talkin' about my children." (She goes on to explain that a conflict arose between her husband and his brother when they were in business together.) Although the ways that Henry and Zelda speak for Irene thus differ and create differing alignments, nonetheless by speaking for Irene in the interview context, they both display and reinforce the closeness of their relationship to her and also transform the interview frame.

The linguistic creation and negotiation of framing is the basis of Tannen and Wallat's (1993) analysis of interaction in a pediatric examination/interview that took place and was videotaped at Georgetown University Hospital's Child Development Center. This study refines and expands a theory of framing in interaction and also demonstrates how an understanding of framing helps account for the participants' contrasting experience of the same interaction - including why the physician's task is extremely challenging. Tannen and Wallat distinguish between two types of framing and explicate their interrelationship in interaction. Framing, in Bateson's and Goffman's sense, is the real-time exchange of metamessages by which speakers communicate and interpret how any utterance is meant. At the same time, researchers in psychology, artificial intelligence, and linguistics use the term

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"frames" and the related term "scripts" to describe the background knowledge that is implicit in – and also necessary to interpret – any utterance. Tannen and Wallat suggest the term *knowledge schemas* to refer to these structures of expectation associated with situations, objects, people; they use the term *interactive frames* to refer to the moment-to-moment signalling of what is going on and how utterances are to be interpreted. In the pediatric interview under analysis, a physician examines a child with cerebral palsy in the mother's presence. The authors identify three distinct interactive frames that characterize the encounter, each associated with an interactive goal or activity: 1) an examination frame by which the pediatrician a) examines the child according to a standard pediatric evaluation and b) relates what she is doing in a monotonous "reporting register" for the benefit of pediatric residents who might later view the videotape; 2) a consultation frame by which she answers the mother's questions about her child's health, and 3) a social encounter frame by which she manages the interaction, for example by telling mother and child where to sit and monitoring the readiness of the videotape crew. What is ostensibly "the same" behavior can actually serve different frames. For example, the pediatrician generally examines the child in the examination frame, but at one point the mother asks her about a skin condition behind the child's ear, and the doctor interrupts the sequence of the standard pediatric evaluation in order to look at the child's ear. This act of examination is therefore part of the consultation frame. At times the physician must balance at least two frames, such as when she both examines the child (examination frame) and entertains her (social encounter frame), the latter enabling the former to proceed. For example, while examining the child's stomach, the doctor teases her by asking, in a high-pitched teasing register, "Any peanut butter and jelly in here?" With a delighted laugh the child responds, "No." An amusing example of a leaky frame occurs when the doctor says, in the same high-pitched teasing register, "Is your spleen palpable over there?" and the child, reacting not to the words but to how they were spoken, again giggles and laughs, "No." By referring to the child's spleen being palpable (the examination frame) in a teasing register (the social encounter frame), the pediatrician's utter-

ance indicates that the latter frame "leaked" into the former. In this case, the encounter proceeded without disruption, but in other instances a mismatch in knowledge schemas triggers a shift in frames. For example, the mother repeatedly expresses concern that she fears her daughter is not getting enough oxygen because her breathing sounds noisy at night. The mother refers to the sound of her child's breathing as "wheezing." In response, the doctor repeatedly reassures her that the noise is not wheezing, which would be evidence of difficulty breathing, but rather a normal symptom of cerebral palsy by which muscle weakness results in "floppy" breathing. In the course of her examination, the physician asks the child to breathe deeply as she listens through a stethoscope. This causes the child's breathing to take on the sound the mother has been asking about, so she interrupts the examination to observe, "That's the particular noise she makes when she sleeps." I use the verb "interrupt" deliberately here, because the doctor abruptly breaks the examination frame in order to turn to the mother and once again reassure her that the noisy breathing is nothing to worry about. (During playback, the doctor noted that in order to avoid such interruptions of her examination, when she sees patients in her private practice rather than the university clinic, she asks the adults accompanying a child to view the examination through a one-way mirror and write down any questions they have to be addressed later.)

Another study that demonstrates the power of a framing approach combined with sociolinguistic microanalysis of interaction is Ribeiro's (1994) analysis of psychotic discourse. Comparing the intake and outtake interviews of a woman admitted to a psychiatric hospital in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Ribeiro shows that the woman's discourse in the intake interview, which appears completely incoherent to a lay observer, can be seen as coherent when viewed through a framing analysis. There are two frames operating in the interaction: In the interview frame, a psychiatrist is asking questions of the patient and the patient fails to answer them. In a psychotic crisis frame, the patient speaks to people who are not present and as people who are not present (and perhaps not alive) or as herself at a different age or in a different context (for example, herself as a child speaking to her

mother or grandmother). The psychotic discourse is incoherent in the interview frame, as the patient jumps from topic to topic, chants and sings, and assumes different voices and footings. But it is coherent within each psychotic frame in turn. Furthermore, the patient makes accurate use of knowledge schemas pertinent to each frame such as the injunction not to make noise in a hospital.

Each of these studies both applies and advances the theoretical concept of framing in sociolinguistic microanalysis of audio- or video-taped interaction.

#### 4.4. Gender and Language

Among the essays by colleagues and students that Gumperz collected in the volume *Language and Social Identity*, the one that has had the most far-reaching influence is Maltz and Borker's (1982) application of Gumperz' IS framework to cross-gender communication. After surveying the findings of research describing differences in ways of speaking that typify boys and men on one hand and girls and women on the other, Maltz and Borker suggest that cross-sex communication can be understood as cross-cultural communication resulting in frequent miscommunication and eventual mutual negative stereotyping. In this view, "American men and women come from different sociolinguistic subcultures, having learned to do different things with words in a conversation, so that when they attempt to carry on conversations with one another, even if both parties are attempting to treat one another as equals, cultural miscommunication results" (200). For example, prior research found that women tend to utter more minimal responses such as "yes," "mhm," and head nods. Maltz and Borker claim that the significant difference is not in the number of minimal responses but rather in the meanings these conversational signals have for men and women. For women, minimal responses signal "I'm listening," whereas for men they signal "I agree," or at least "I follow your argument so far." As a result, a man who receives a steady stream of head nods and "mhm's" may logically conclude that the woman he is talking to is agreeing with everything he has said, whereas she is demonstrating only that she is listening. Conversely, a woman who receives only occasional nods and "mhm's" may understandably conclude that the man she is ad-

ressing is not listening, whereas he is signalling only that he does not agree with everything she has said. This simple difference in use of minimal responses (one might call them contextualization conventions) explains, in part, two common complaints: men's complaint that it is impossible to tell what women really think, and women's complaint that men never listen.

Maltz and Borker's IS approach to cross-gender communication provides the theoretical foundation for Tannen's analysis of conversations between women and men as presented in the essays collected in *Gender and Discourse* as well as her books for general audiences, *You Just Don't Understand* and *Talking from 9 to 5*. In addition to the conceptualization of cross-gender communication as cross-cultural, the notion of framing also elucidates male-female interaction. In the spirit by which IS resists the one-to-one correlation of a particular way of speaking with a single meaning, Tannen (1994b), following Goffman (1977), suggests that ways of speaking that pattern by gender are not sex-linked but rather sex-class linked. "Class" in this sense refers not to the notion of social class but rather to logical types: the class of women and the class of men, as distinguished from any individual woman or man. In other words, to say that a particular stylistic construction or convention is associated with the class of women is not to claim that any individual woman necessarily uses that convention. Tannen argues, moreover, that framing is a way of serving the intertwined interactional goals of negotiating both status and connection. She then contrasts two workplace examples of small talk: one between two men, and another among four women. In the first example, a subordinate (Dan) replies to his boss's (John's) inquiry about his computer with the colloquial complaint, "It sucks." John asks for specifics, then avers that he can fix it in "twenty five seconds." Disbelieving, Dan says, "I challenge you to do it." John responds, in a mock-tough voice that frames his utterance as non-serious, "You are a fool if you think you can challenge me, Mr. Computer!" Soon after, Dan, who knows that John has been suffering from an intestinal ailment, shifts frames and asks, "How are you feeling today, John?" In response, John reports, in some detail, the symptoms of his intestinal distress, then adds, "It made me so glad that there was no girlfriend around, nobody could take care me"

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because he hates "being sick and somebody wants to take care of me." Tannen argues that the interchange about John's ability to fix Dan's computer reflects negotiation of relative status: John is reinforcing his position as a superior, and reinforcing Dan's position as a computer incompetent as well as a subordinate. When he talks about his intestinal ailments, however, John re-establishes rapport with Dan, and cements their solidarity by aligning with Dan man-to-man in opposition to women who annoyingly try to take care of sick men who only want to be left alone. All these elements of the conversation are sex-class linked: John and Dan negotiate and reinforce not only the differences in their status and their relative connection to each other but also their conformity to our culture's expectations that men talk about computers, demonstrate competence, engage in playful challenges, need no help even when sick, and define themselves in opposition to women.

The conversation among four women also involves workers of varying rank: June, a mail clerk, enters an office in which three other women are engaged in conversation: Tina, the manager of the office and also the daughter of the company's owner; Heather, who is next in rank under Tina; and Janice, a temporary office worker who was recording the conversation for her own sociolinguistic research. From one point of view the conversation that ensues is classically sex-class linked in that it is focused on clothing and shopping and involves ritualized compliments rather than challenges. After June says "Hi," Tina calls admiring attention to June's outfit: "Hey! Ah, we gotta see this getup. Come on in." Tina compliments, "that's cute," and Heather echoes a compliment, "Love that beautiful blouse!" June then explains how she came to wear these clothes and where she bought the blouse. But relative status is revealed and created by this exchange as well. It is Tina's privilege, as the highest-ranking participant, to invite June into the office and initiate the frame shift from the discussion she had been having with her co-workers to one that involves the mail clerk. The complimenting ritual simultaneously includes June in the interaction (hence creating connection) and also constitutes her subordinate role. Moreover, June and Janice, the two women who have the lowest status, speak in the lowest-key and paralinguistically most subdued manner.

#### 4.5. Involvement strategies: Creating meaning in interaction

Tannen (1989) details a theory of involvement in discourse that is founded on the theoretical tenets and analytic methods of IS. She demonstrates that meaning is communicated and interpreted in ordinary conversation by means of linguistic strategies that have traditionally been thought quintessentially literary such as repetition, dialogue, details, figures of speech, and patterned rhythm. These strategies, which are shaped and elaborated in literary discourse, are pervasive, spontaneous, and deeply functional in everyday conversation. Tannen calls them "involvement strategies" because they draw on and simultaneously create interpersonal involvement. Details and dialogue combine to suggest culturally recognizable scenes (akin to frames) by reference to which utterances are interpreted. Dialogue combines with repetition (including the repetition of prepatterned syntactic and intonational contours) to create rhythms that involve interlocutors in rhythmic ensemble (Scollon 1982; Auer, Couper-Kuhlen, and Muller 1999) much as musicians create ensemble when they play together. Together, the scenic and musical nature of speech, and the emotions they evoke, are the dynamics by which linguistic strategies create meaning and involvement in discourse. Repetition, dialogue, and details are the strategies Tannen explicates in depth. Following Bolinger (1976), Hymes (1981), and Becker (1995), Tannen sees patterned repetitions and contrasts as no less than the means by which speakers not only learn language but also structure language to convey meaning. She illustrates the functions of repetition in the production and comprehension of language as well as in creating cohesion and maintaining interaction (for example, to get or keep the floor, show listenership, stall, persuade, gear up to speak, create humor, and so on). The multiple functions of repetition are illustrated in another segment from the Thanksgiving dinner conversation that provided the excerpt presented in 4.2. In the present example, Peter and Deborah are speaking with Chad, another participant from California. In discussing eating habits, Chad says "I go out a lot"; Deborah echoes, "I go out and eat," and Peter responds, "You go out?" At the same time that all three align by addressing the topic of eating, they also

create and demonstrate involvement by repeating the phrase, "go out." (The more common phrase that Deborah might have uttered in a different context is "eat out"). Peter then says, "The trouble with me is if I don't prepare and eat well, I eat a lot." This last phrase, "I eat a lot," combines "a lot" from Chad's opening statement "I go out a lot" and "eat" from Deborah's echo, "I go out and eat." This is just a tiny example of what Tannen illustrates at length: that through repetition discourse is woven from the thread of prior talk. Peter goes on to explain that if he takes the time to prepare himself a nice meal, he eats less than he does if he eats whatever happens to be available. (His actual utterance includes more repetition: "And so if I'm just eating like cheese and crackers, I'll just stuff myself on cheese and crackers, but if I fix myself something nice, I don't have to eat that much." Deborah's rejoinder and Peter's response to it evidence complex repetition:

Deborah: Hmmmm ... Well then it works. Then it's a good idea.

Peter: It's a good idea in terms of eating. It's not a good idea in terms of time.

The bulk of this segment is made up of the repeated words and phrases "then," "it's a good idea," and "in terms of." Peter highlights the contrast between eating, on the one hand, and time, on the other, by framing the contrasting terms in the repeated set-up sentences "a good idea in terms of." Furthermore, whereas the message of his response to Deborah's comment is disagreement (she says it's a good idea and he is saying it's not), this potential false note of disagreement is overridden by the meta-message of ratification and involvement in his repetition of her words. That is, Peter ratifies Deborah's contribution by stating his disagreement in her frame – the words she just spoke. In this way, repetition functions simultaneously on the four levels of production, comprehension, cohesion, and interaction.

Addressing dialogue as an involvement strategy, Tannen suggests that the term "reported speech" is a misnomer. When speakers cast others' words in dialogue, or (as is more often the case) cast their own thoughts as dialogue spoken by themselves or others,

they are not reporting what in fact occurred but constructing dialogue to communicate in the present. Communicating ideas by constructing dialogue creates involvement through its rhythmic, sonorous effect and by turning story into drama. Listeners then become like members of the audience at a dramatic performance who use their own past experience to interpret the meaning of events portrayed. This active participation in sensemaking contributes to the creation of involvement at the same that it relies on shared experience, or involvement, to provide meaning. Again, a single tiny example can convey what Tannen illustrates with numerous examples. In a lunch conversation, several women are discussing their experiences as mothers of children who are finally old enough to engage in play activities without an adult accompanying them:

DAISY The minute the kids get old enough to do these things themselves,

that's when

MARY "You do it yourself."

DAISY Yeah that's when I start to say ...

"Well ... I don't think I'll go in the water this time.

Why don't you kids go on the ferris wheel.

I'll wave to you."

Mary provides a line of dialogue, "You do it yourself," by way of listenership: She speaks as a mother talking to a child in just the constellation Daisy has set up. Then Daisy uses dialogue to instantiate a representative situation, not a literally reported one, as she moves from going "in the water" to going "on the ferris wheel." These specific instances of activities that children enjoy, but which mothers are just as happy to forego, illustrate the larger point that the mothers are jointly constructing in this conversation. The lines of dialogue are hypothetical, you might say, but by being presented as dialogue, they create a scene that is recognizable to all the women present. Just as constructed dialogue conveys ideas while also creating involvement, so do specific details and the images they construct. For example, in the preceding discussion of repetition, the point of Peter's utterance was paraphrased by using the general description, "whatever happens to be available." In the actual discourse, Peter used a specific instance, "cheese and crackers." You might say the general description is more specifically accurate, since Peter

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clearly did not intend to say that cheese and crackers are the only food he might eat when he fails to prepare "something nice." But the specificity of "cheese and crackers" makes it easier for a listener to visualize a scene of Peter eating too much of something that is not fully nourishing. So although it is literally less accurate, it is more effective in communicating meaning by drawing on and simultaneously creating listeners' involvement.

These representative studies are only a small number of the vast and ever-growing body of work that uses interactional sociolinguistic theory and method to deepen our understanding of how language works to exchange meaning in interaction as well as the role of language in constituting and negotiating social relationships.

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## 9. Discourse Analysis and Conversation Analysis Diskurs und Konversationsanalyse

1. Introduction
2. Definitions: What is discourse?
3. Approaches to discourse analysis
4. Unity from diversity?
5. Literature (selected)

### 1. Introduction

The growth of discourse analysis is well attested not only in Linguistics and its sub-field Sociolinguistics, but also within the various disciplines known collectively as the human sciences (e.g. psychology, anthropology, sociology), the communication sciences (e.g. rhetoric, communication), and the humanities (e.g. history, literature). Assuming for a moment that we define discourse as "language above the sentence" (but see 2.0), there are three levels at which the language of discourse can be analyzed. First is discourse as a linguistic text: what qualities and properties distinguish a text from a random set of sentences? Second is how text relates to lower level units: how is discourse (as either monologue or dialogue) related to clauses, sentences, and propositions? Third is discourse as part of other systems: how is discourse embedded within, and partially constitutive of, larger domains of meaning (e.g. psychological, social, cultural, politi-

cal, ideological)? Although linguists analyze discourse at any – or all – of these levels, discourse analysts coming from the disciplines noted above tend to focus primarily on the third level.

The variety of disciplinary contributions to discourse analysis, as well as the three analytical levels, have the positive effect of extending the range of phenomena that can be understood through an understanding of discourse. Yet they also have other consequences that hinder the development of one single, united field of discourse analysis. Not only do they encourage (indeed, demand) attention to multiple sources and types of data, as well as the use of numerous means of analysis, but they preclude the availability – or appropriateness – of focus on a single set of research problems or development of only one discourse theory.

Represented in our recent handbook of discourse analysis (Schiffrin, Tannen and Hamilton 2001), for example, are a variety of means of collecting data. Although virtually all discourse analysts avoid use of hypothetical utterance sequences, the means of collecting instances of language use include participant observation, accessing on-line corpora (e.g. from the media, of

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### 2. Defini

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