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Preface

This is the fifth volume of Wellington Working Papers in Linguistics reporting on the research of graduate students and staff of the Department of Linguistics at Victoria University. The theme for this volume is pragmatics and discourse analysis.

Jane Pilkington's paper on gossip was written in her Honours year. It is a valuable addition to the Department's on-going research on language and gender. Maria Stubbe's paper is another contribution to this area which focuses on methodological issues. Reflecting on the lessons learned while completing her MA thesis, she argues for and illustrates the crucial importance of a qualitative interpretive approach in language and gender research - an approach of precisely the kind Jane Pilkington's study exemplifies.

Lisa Matthewson and Chris Lane identify features of discourse in different types of social contexts. Chris Lane's paper develops further his extensive research on the language of the courts; he discusses the very different functions of repetitive questioning in different contexts. This paper is a further example of Maria Stubbe's point that focussing on form alone can be very misleading. Lisa Matthewson is now working on a PhD in the area of morphology at the University of British Columbia, but the paper in this volume was undertaken in her Honours year. It makes an original and fascinating contribution to the discourse analysis of conversation. The television acts not only as a stimulus for topic-related talk, but is also treated as an addressee and co-participant. The interpretation of pragmatic intentions in context is once again crucial.

These papers reflect the vitality of the department's research programme and it is encouraging to note that all three students whose papers appear in this volume are engaged in further research.

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Repetitive questioning in courtroom interaction and interlanguage communication

Chris Lane

Abstract

Repetitive questioning has been observed as a feature of courtroom interaction -- repetitive questioning of witnesses by lawyers and judges -- where it has been interpreted as a coercive, challenging tactic. Repetitive questioning has also been observed in interlanguage communication -- repetitive questioning of second language speakers by native speakers -- where it has been interpreted as facilitative, as repair by the native speaker, allowing the second language speaker further opportunities for comprehension or production and for contributing to the conversation. How is repetitive questioning to be interpreted in the context of the questioning by native English speaking lawyers and judges of witnesses who are second language speakers of English? This paper suggests that the apparently conflicting viewpoints can be resolved by considering i) the range of functions of repeated or rephrased questions and of requests for clarification and other contingent queries, and ii) features of the context which favour particular interpretations over others.

. . . .

Introduction

This paper is concerned with repetitive questioning and its interpretation. Repetitive questioning has previously been studied from (at least) two research perspectives. One perspective is that of studies of interlanguage communication, i.e. communication between native and second language speakers, as an aspect of second language acquisition; and the other perspective is that of studies of courtroom interaction. Repetitive questioning phenomena have been noted (under various labels) as features of interlanguage communication, particularly by Hatch (1978), Long (1983) and Carpenter (1983). Repetitive questioning sequences are also readily observable in courtroom interaction solely amongst native speakers of English (Dunstan 1980, Lane 1985a, 1985b, 1990).

However, the interpretations of the phenomena from the two different perspectives are strikingly different. In studies of interlanguage communication (particularly by Hatch and her colleagues), questioning, and especially repetitive questioning, have been seen as facilitating the second language speaker's contribution to the discourse, while in studies of courtroom interaction, there has been a strong tendency to see questioning as a means of control and coercion, especially by Danet and her colleagues (Danet and Bogoch 1980, Danet, Hoffman et al 1980) and by Harris (1984).

In this paper I wish to consider data consisting of courtroom questioning by native English speakers of witnesses who are second language speakers of English. These two perspectives offer two quite different models for the analysis of my particular data: repetitive questioning as repair or as challenge. Hence the questions arise: is one correct, or can the apparent difference be resolved? How should the data be analysed?

The data in question occur in stenographers' transcripts of District Court trials in Auckland. The sequences of particular interest are ones in which white native English-speaking lawyers and judges question Polynesian witnesses who are second-language speakers of English and native speakers of the Polynesian languages Samoan, Tongan and Cook Islands Maori. These witnesses' testimonies took place without the intervention of an interpreter.

Repetitive questioning sequences

Definitions

I will use the term 'elicitation' (abbreviation E) rather than 'question', to indicate that I am referring to an illocutionary category rather than a syntactic or intonational one. I will also refer to 'contingent queries' (CQs) i.e. queries which are contingent on prior utterances (Garvey 1977, 1979). These are often known as 'clarification requests' or 'requests for clarification', and may be characterised by Christian's (1980: 131) definition of 'request for clarification':

> The major defining characteristic of a request for clarification as it is viewed here is that it signal [*sic*] some problem in processing a prior utterance, either in hearing or in fully understanding it.

I prefer the term 'contingent query' because it makes fewer assumptions about such utterances, which in fact can be used for purposes other than requesting clarification.

What I call a 'repetitive questioning sequence' (or RQS) may be defined informally as a sequence in which one participant asks versions of the 'same question' (or questions concerned with the same 'point' or 'issue') two or more times. More precisely, a repetitive questioning sequence is built up in the following way. It starts with one participant's elicitation; in following turns the same (or sometimes another) participant either repeats the initial elicitation verbatim, or rephrases it, i.e. repeats it in a paraphrased form (the repeated or rephrased elicitation can be called a re-elicitation, or RE); or alternatively uses a contingent query (CQ) following the respondent's response to one of these (re)elicitations. In a repetitive questioning sequence, any appropriate answer to a re-elicitation or to a contingent query will be interpreted as confirming, qualifying or correcting the responses earlier in the sequence.

I am interested in why these sequences occur and what the purposes of such repetitive questioning might be. A specific question which I want to address in this paper is: what are the functions in such sequences of contingent queries and re-elicitations?

Interlanguage communication

Hatch (1978) observes that native speakers tend to control interlanguage communication by asking questions, and gives examples such as the following to illustrate how native English speakers use repetitive questioning to give a second language speaker repeated opportunities to provide an appropriate response to an elicitation.

(1) From Hatch (1978: 418):

Pauline (native speaker of French) & typist (NS: native speaker of English)

a	E	NS:	I see. Well, is it typed?
b		P:	Type? Yes uh for the I don't I don't type.
c	RE	NS:	Is it handwritten?
d		P:	Uh. Pardon me. Excuse me?
e	RE2	NS:	Is your thesis now handwritten?
f		P:	I don't understand you. Because excuse me I I speak a little bit English. I speak French. Do you speak French?
g		NS:	No unfortunately not enough. No, I know a very little but

I really couldn't speak it.

RE3   Mmm [searching for words] is y- is your thesis now typewritten or did you write it by hand?

h   P: Ah yes, by hand.

i   CQ NS: By hand.

j   P: Now I I me I write my copy by hand but uh uh I like you type for me. You understand?

k   NS: Oh yes

Hatch interprets the native speaker's re-elicitations as 'repairs'; both following a second language speaker's contingent query (which is a more obvious case) as in turns (d) and (e); and also following an inappropriate response, as in turns (b) and (c), because an inappropriate response seems to have the same effect as a contingent query/request for clarification. Her notion is that the native speaker, in offering repeated or rephrased versions of an elicitation, is giving the second language speaker repeated opportunities to work out what the elicitation is about, so that the second language speaker can eventually come up with a relevant contribution to the interaction. This seems a perfectly reasonable analysis of the data she quotes. In terms of Krashen's (1980) input hypothesis, repetitive questioning can be seen as a way for the native speaker to make sure that the second language speaker receives comprehensible input.

Courtroom Interaction

As I have mentioned, in courtroom interaction studies there is a tendency to treat questions as inherently controlling or coercive, but in fact I think much of this character is due to specific situational norms, especially the fact that there are legal sanctions which can be invoked for not answering a question, but also the norm that witnesses' responses are supposed to closely match the information requirements of the lawyers' questions - what I call tight topic constraints, as opposed to the loose topic constraints which typically apply in conversation. See Lane (1990) for a more detailed discussion of these points.

An important point is that lawyers' turns in testimony are only ostensibly requests for information: as Atkinson and Drew (1979: 105-6) have pointed out, they may have many other functions, including challenge or accusation. Nevertheless they are subject to the constraint that they must be recognisable by co-participants as 'questions', and allow (or rather require) witnesses to respond to them as if they were solely 'questions'.

In examples (2) and (3), both lawyer and witness are native English speakers. New Zealand courts operate on an adversary system (which closely follows the English model), and these extracts are from cross-examination, i.e. that part of a trial in which a lawyer questions a witness called by the opposing party. These examples intuitively have an aggressive, challenging character, and just looking informally at the use of repetitive questioning here, in (2) it can be seen as having at least the following functions:

* to challenge and unsettle the witness and possibly get a change in testimony (though such changes are rare in my data);

* to cast doubt on the witness's evidence;

* to present part of the defence case to the judge (in these trials, there are no opening speeches);

* to test the witness's response to part of the defence evidence (for the judge's satisfaction, mainly).

(2)   From Lane (1985a: 200):

Trial 4. Defence counsel Dc cross-examining prosecution witness G.B. (Pakeha native English speaker).

a   E Dc: Words were being exchanged between you weren't they?

b   G.B.: His exact words were to me, as I said before, I asked him to put his seat belt on and he called me a fucking wanker and a noddy and put it on yourself if you want it on.

c   RE Dc: I said words were being exchanged between you?

d   G.B.: No they were not.

e   RE2 Dc: He will give evidence that you were abusing him in similar terms to the terms he was using to you?

f   G.B.: I would call him a liar.

g   Dc: In fact when he gives evidence Mr B. he will tell the Court the car never left where it was stationary on the side of the road?

h   G.B.: As I say again I would call him a liar. We hit the footpath and hit the kerb and went up onto the footpath.

i   RE3 Dc: He will say when he gives evidence Mr B. that in fact he was

abusive to you, he used foul language to you; he will say that
you used language back to him of a similar kind?

j   G.B.: That would be incorrect.

In (3), repetitive questioning can be seen as attempting to pin the witness down to a definite answer, hopefully favourable to the defence, again to present part of the defence case to the judge and to the witness, and to portray the witness to the audience as evasive, as having something to hide.

(3) From Lane (1985b: 77):

Trial 4. Defence counsel Dc cross-examining prosecution witness H.C.
      (Pakeha native English speaker)

a   E Dc: You didn't see traffic offer B. hitting the defendant?
b   H.C.: I saw him sort of fending for himself.
c   Dc: Describe with your hands?
d   H.C.: Well he was trying to stop him and throw him off.
e   RE Dc: You didn't see him striking him with the back of his hand?
f   H.C.: Oh yes I saw him sort of do this action, yes.
g RE2 Dc: Did you see him strike him in the face with the back of his hand?
h   H.C.: He possible could have.
i RE3 Dc: Did you see him or not Mr C.?
j   H.C.: He may have hit him while he was trying to fend him off.
k RE4 Dc: I am asking you, did you see him hit him in the face with his hand?
l   H.C.: No.
m CQ Dc: You didn't see that?
n   H.C.: No.
o   Dc: But you were watching the whole thing?
p   H.C.: Yes.

Interpreting repetitive questioning

It is possible to provide more formally for the different interpretations of repetitive questioning, as illustrated in the scheme presented in Tables 1 and 2. This is part of a possible general model: I don't want to claim that it is totally comprehensive.

TABLE 1
Interpretations of a contingent query

Sequence:	E	A: elicitation
	R	B: response
	CQ	A: contingent query

CQ claims that there is a problem for A in processing R.

Problem:	Pragmatic interpretation of CQ as request for clarification	as other illocutionary act
a) A's hearing of R	request for repetition (or confirmation of hearing)	
b) A's grasping semantic content of R	request for rephrasing or explanation	
c) A's interpreting pragmatic force	request for rephrasing or explanation	objection to perceived force of R
d) Integrating R with A's current knowledge or point of view	request for explanation or elaboration	expression of surprise, interest or disagreement
e) B's production of R:		
i) error		prompt for self-correction
ii) violation of Grice's maxims	(see Table 2 for more detailed analysis)	challenge to B, comment to audience

Table 1 begins with a general characterisation of contingent query, based on Christian's definition of a request for clarification. When participant A makes an utterance which is recognisable as a contingent query, such as *What?*, *Say that again?* or an 'echo-question' form as in examples (3) and (4), participant B is faced with a choice of possible interpretations, some of which are set out in Table 1. As well as the work of Christian (1980) and Garvey (1977,1979), this table draws heavily on studies of 'repair' by Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks (1977) and of 'clarification requests' by Thompson (1982). Some of the possible interpretations of a contingent query are as a request for a specific type of clarification, depending on what problem B can identify in the context. Other interpretations are as illocutionary acts of different kinds, and these interpretations can be seen as pragmatic extensions of the different types of request for clarification. Note that I am not claiming that these other interpretations are derived from the clarification request interpretations in psychological processing. They could be treated as conventionalised implicatures which may be directly accessed in processing.

Table 2 presents a similar scheme for re-elicitations. The general characterisation is worded in a way designed to show the similarity to contingent queries, but it might be better to say that a re-elicitation makes a claim that the previous (re)elicitation has not been satisfactorily answered. This interpretation could be treated as a Gricean conversational implicature (Grice 1975), with the repetition of the elicitation flouting the maxim of quantity. There are then different ways in which the preceding response may be unsatisfactory, as set out in Table 2.

This scheme allows for both Hatch's 'repair' interpretation, and for the interpretation of repetitive questioning as challenging and coercive.

Grice's maxims are a useful reference, because they correspond fairly closely to official courtroom norms, as expressed for instance in the oath to tell "the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth". These are distinct from participants' actual expectations, which are that witnesses regularly lie, mislead, tell half-truths and so forth; but the official norms can be implicitly invoked to challenge witnesses and comment on their performance.

TABLE 2
Interpretations of a re-elicitation

Sequence:	E	A:	elicitation
	R	B:	response
	RE	A:	re-elicitation

RE claims that there is a problem in B's production of R.

Problem	Pragmatic interpretation of RE
a) B's difficulty in comprehending E	"repair" of E (Hatch)
b) Error in B's production	prompt for self-correction
c) Violation of Grice's maxims (= official courtroom norms):	challenge to B (plus request for an altered response), comment to audience (judge, other counsel etc.), on the basis that R is:
Quality	untruthful, inconsistent
Relation	irrelevant, evasive
Manner	unclear, evasive
Quantity	misleading, evasive

I think the choice of interpretation here, for both analysts and participants, is strongly influenced by expectations of the particular activity type, and by perceptions of the participants' goals in the particular sequences, and I want to try to illustrate that now by referring to examples involving the courtroom questioning of second language speakers of English. These examples have been discussed more extensively in earlier work (Lane 1985a,b, 1988).

In (4), it is doubtful whether the witness has understood the lawyers' questions, in terms of identifying the particular house referred to, or in terms of the questions' strategic purpose, and this extract can be analysed in Hatch's terms, in spite of being part of a cross-examination; although an interpretation in terms of challenge and resistance is possible.

(4) Trial 2B. Defence counsel Dc cross-examining prosecution witness E.H. (of Samoan origin).

a   Ea Dc: There is a house on the corner isn't there?

b   E.H.: The second house on the corner.

c   REa Dc: There is a house on the corner?

d   E.H.: I don't know what number it is, but it is the second house round the corner of T. Road and R. Street. I saw him walk towards the second house.

e   Eb Dc: Mr H. when you [should be *he*?] got to the corner, he disappeared behind the first house at the corner?

f   E.H.: I can see clearly towards the gates and he goes to the second house.

g   REb Dc: When he turned the corner, he disappeared behind another house, didn't he?

h   E.H.: No.

i   CQ Dc: He didn't?

j   E.H.: No.

k   REb2 Dc: You saw him the whole time?

l   E.H.: I saw him get inside the house.

(5) is part of an examination-in-chief - a co-operative situation in which the lawyer is questioning his own witness, and would have already rehearsed the story. So it is reasonable to interpret the re-elicitation at turn (e) as a prompt for self-correction, and (f) as a correction of (d).

(5) Trial 2A Defence counsel Dc. examining witness S.W. (of Samoan origin).

a   E Dc: Did you go anywhere else with him?

b   S.W.: My brother and my sister-in-law came with me on that night.

c   RE Dc: Did you decide to go somewhere else when you were in

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the car?

d   S.W.: No.

e   RE2 Dc: When you were in the car did you decide to go somewhere else?

f   S.W.: Yes when we arrive home, I ask him because that time I have this dance ticket. I asked him please can he drive me down to the dance.

g   Dc: Where had you bought this ticket?

h   S.W.: From the Z. Hotel, [suburb].

The next two examples illustrate more confrontational cross-examination sequences.

(6) Trial 2B. Defence counsel Dc cross-examining prosecution witness E.H. (of Samoan origin).

a   Ea Dc: And what did these people do when you grabbed them?

b   E.H.: They fight.

c   Dc: They were fighting.
     REa   What did they do when you took hold of them?

d   E.H.: They stopped.

e   Dc: They stopped immediately did they?

f   E.H.: Not immediately but soon they stop.

g   Dc: Were people punching each other when you arrived, Mr H.?

h   E.H.: Yes.

i   Eb Dc: Were people still punching each other when you took hold of this man or these men?

j   E.H.: No.

k   CQ Dc: They'd stopped had they?

l   E.H.: Yes.

m   Dc: What were they doing?

n   E.H.: Stop.

o   REb Dc: Did they stop before you took over is that right?

p   E.H.: I don't know why they stop but they stop.

q   REb2 Dc: Did they stop before you grabbed them?

r   E.H.: No.

s   REb3 Dc: So they must have stopped after you took hold of them, is that right?

t   E.H.: Yes.

u REb4 Dc: Let's get this quite clear, Mr H. They were punching each
other up to the time that you took hold of them.

v   E.H.: Yes.

w   Dc: And they stopped immediately you took hold of them?

x   E.H.: Yes.

In (6), the lawyer picks up on an apparent self-correction by the witness at turn (j), as a problem to be probed further by repetitive questioning. Since this is a cross-examination, it suits the lawyer's purposes to highlight this apparent discrepancy and make the witness appear wavering and inconsistent, although the issue seems to be resolved in the end..

(7) Trial 1. Defence counsel Dc cross-examining prosecution witness F.R.
(of Cook Islands origin) before judge Ja.

a   Ea Dc: Did you say to the policeman "I think it is either that fellow or
another one"?

b   F.R.: I told the policeman it was him.

c   REa Ja: I want you to listen carefully. Mr Dc asked you a direct
question which went like this, that you said to the policeman
it is either that man. It may be him, might be another person.
What I want to know, is that what you said, yes or no?

d   F.R.: Yes.

e REa2 Ja: Were you not sure who it was that had hit you?

f   F.R.: I am.

g   Eb Ja: If you told the policeman it might be this man or might be
someone else, why are you so certain now?

h   F.R.: Because I saw his face.

i REa3 Ja: You say it was him.

j   F.R.: Yes.

k REb Ja: Why are you so sure now that it was him?

l   F.R.: It was.

m REb2 Dc: Are you sure that it is him now because the police have
brought him to Court, is that why you are sure now?

n   F.R.: I was sure that night.

o   Dc: But you said, you told his worship a minute ago when he was

brought to you, it could be him and it might be somebody else.
Why did you say that then?

p   F.R.: . . .

q   Ja: Witness hesitates and is silent for some time. You do not know.
Leave it.

r   Dc: If I told you he had a brother who was there on that night about
the same age, would that make you wonder again about
whether you were sure if that was the man? Would that make
you wonder?

s   Ja: Witness is silent.

t   Dc: I will leave it there.

In (7), the point at issue is crucial in the trial. The witness's turn (d) is probably based on a misinterpretation of the judge's awkwardly expressed turn (c). This is then seized on by both the judge and defence counsel as an apparent change of testimony, and both pursue it with repetitive questioning which implies criticism of the witness's apparent inconsistency, with the lawyer highlighting the answer that favours his client.

An alternative interpretation of events in examples (6) and (7) is that the witnesses hear re-elicitations as prompts for self-correction, i.e. as telling them that they have said something wrong and that they have to correct their previous response.

Conclusion

Returning to the apparent conflict between the repair interpretation of repetitive questioning in interlanguage communication, as in (1), and the challenge interpretation in cross-examination, as in (2) and (3), this can be resolved if we consider the different possible functions of repetitive questioning (as set out in Tables 1 and 2) and the contextual factors that favour particular functional interpretations.

In the context of interlanguage communication, the fact that the second-language speaker is not fully proficient in the language of interaction is likely to predispose analysts and other observers, and also presumably the participants, to interpret repetitive questioning as part of a process of repairing faulty comprehension or production. This is reinforced where the interaction is a friendly, informal conversation in which there is no particular reason to expect challenges or

accusations. It is also reinforced where the second-language speaker's lack of fluency is overtly referred to by the participants, as it is in (1).

Conversely, in interaction between native speakers, the repair interpretation is not favoured, and if the interaction is a cross-examination, which almost by definition is an adversary encounter, then observers and participants will be predisposed to a challenge interpretation. In more co-operative encounters (which I have not considered in detail here), neither repair nor challenge interpretations would be strongly favoured, and I would expect interpretations to be more variable, with repair interpretations being perhaps more likely for contingent queries and challenge interpretations for re-elicitations.

Where the interaction involves interlanguage communication in a courtroom context, then one needs to look carefully to see whether issues of language proficiency are salient in the particular sequence, in which case a repair interpretation is likely to be favoured, or whether conflict of evidence (in cross-examination) is the overriding issue, in which case a challenge interpretation is more likely.

This discussion also illustrates, once again, that particular language forms cannot always be assumed to have particular, invariant functions, and that the interpretation of function depends on paying careful attention to relevant features of the context.

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Talking to the TV
The conversational behaviour of television viewers

Lisa Matthewson

Abstract

People talk to the television. When they do so, however, their utterances are intended for other viewers. Addressing an utterance to the television provides an immediate and interesting way of conveying to other viewers one's reaction to events or characters. For similar reasons, viewers often assume the role of a television character, speaking 'with' the television. Beyond utterances 'to' and 'with' the television, aspects of the conversational behaviour of viewers, such as turn-taking and topic choice, are distinctively influenced by the television.

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Introduction

In various studies done in the USA in the early 1970s it was discovered that watching television was frequently accompanied by other forms of entertainment, particularly conversation. In one national sample (Lo Sciuto 1972) it was found that more than two thirds of television viewing was accompanied by some other activity, and that the accompanying activity was frequently conversation (Comstock et al. 1978: 146). Bechtel et al. (1972), who installed cameras in homes to observe the behaviour of viewers, report that viewers engaged in, (among many other things) general conversation, asking questions about the television programme, mimicking the television portrayal, and conversing with the television set (Comstock et al. 1978: 145).

This last activity - conversing with the television set - may initially appear an unusual one, as the term 'converse' generally implies at least two animate interlocutors. Yet 'talking to the television' is a very common phenomenon. This paper describes a study of the conversational behaviour of television viewers, and investigates, among other things, 'talking to the television'.

The paper begins with a description of the methodology of the study. Talk both addressed 'to' and spoken 'with' the television is then examined, and the functions of such utterances is discussed. These types of utterance are then examined in relation to Goffman's (1981) notion of 'footing'. In the final sections the turn-taking behaviour and topic choice of the television viewers in the study is described, and compared to 'normal' (non-television watching) conversational behaviour.

Method

Participants were recorded in groups of between two and four, watching television and conversing. The participants in the study formed a homogeneous sample of 7 female university students and one female Teachers' College student, all between the ages of 20 and 22. Choice of participants was based primarily on the requirement that viewers recorded together were friends, or at least acquaintances, with enough in common so that relaxed, informal and yet animated conversation could be expected between them. In almost all cases participants were recorded in their own homes, which also contributed to the desired relaxed atmosphere. The tape recorder was placed in an observable but unostentatious position in the room. I was a participant for all recordings, which aided the subsequent transcription and interpretation of the data.

Recordings were originally made during four television programmes, comprising two episodes of *Days of our Lives*, an American soap opera, one episode of *Neighbours*, an Australian soap opera, and one episode of *Sale of the Century*, a New Zealand quiz show. These programmes were chosen primarily because of their popularity with the participants. It was essential that the participants enjoyed watching the programmes recorded, and it was also desirable that they be, wherever possible, regular watchers of the programmes, to ensure that no boredom with the programme ensued and that participants remained 'active viewers'. The programmes were also chosen specifically as ones which I considered likely to produce instances of 'talking to the television'. Personal experience and anecdotal evidence had led me to believe that talking both to soap operas and to quiz shows is a fairly common occurrence.

The episode of *Neighbours* was, however, subsequently rejected as not useful for the study. It proved to be an unpopular choice; viewers were not particularly interested in events on the screen and hence could not be described as actively watching. The data for the other three programmes was transcribed, producing approximately 2 and a quarter hours of transcript.

The transcription was unproblematic apart from occasional brief periods of mumbled or quiet talk. The television, as well as the conversation, could in general be heard on the tapes, which was important for comparing 'programme time' behaviour with 'advertisement time' behaviour. However the exact point of switch between programme and advertisements was often obscured by talk, rendering comparisons of programme and advertisement time behaviour to some extent approximate.

Utterances addressed to the television

Types of 'to' utterances
The television was addressed frequently (for exact numbers of utterances addressed to the television see Table 2 below).

The utterances addressed to the television (which I shall refer to as 'to' utterances) were generally insults. Some examples are given in (1) ('to' utterances are in italics throughout):

(1)   *Tony you pervert*
        Tony you creep
        oh you patronising bastard
        you bimbo
        you bitch
        Carlo ya dick

Less frequent than insults were advice to the characters, as in (2):

(2)   *go with your instincts Marie*
        get up and make yourself a cup of hot chocolate babe
        oh go on do it Michelle buy those go on
        Melissa don't do it
        don't be nice to him he's a creep

and comments on the characters' actions, as in (3):

(3)   *wrong thing to say Tony*
        good on you Abe

There were also various miscellaneous 'to' utterances, generally spoken (or screamed!) at moments of extreme emotional involvement on the part of the speaker. For example:

(4)   *how do YOU know you haven't lost YOUR husband*
        well of COURSE she hasn't 'cause you didn't give her any money
        oh come on you just wanna get into her

Function of 'to' utterances

It is obviously not possible to 'converse' with the television. What, then, could be the function of utterances addressed to this inanimate object? I initially considered it plausible that such utterances function as displays, in the sense of Goffman (1981), which are in effect instances of self-talk performed for the benefit of others. In Matthewson (1989: 3) I briefly discussed talk addressed to inanimate objects and suggested that it should be regarded as self-talk. Examination of the television data, however, showed that talk addressed to the television should not in fact be regarded as self-talk or displays.

The major features of displays, according to Goffman, are as follows. By uttering a display, the speaker 'renders readily accessible to witnesses what he chooses to assign to his inward state' (1981: 90, original pronoun choice). So far, the 'to the television' utterances fit the description of displays. When a viewer screams at a television character 'you bitch!', she conveys to the only animate recipients of her utterance, the other viewers, her inward state, namely that she is angry at the character and considers her to be a bitch.

Not all utterances which perform this function, however, are displays. Displays tend to occur in moments of embarrassment for the speaker. Goffman writes that displays 'provid[e] evidence to everyone who can hear that our observable plight is not something that should be taken to define us' (1981: 136), and cites as a major reason for displays the

> sudden need of reestablishing ourselves in the eyes and ears of witnesses
> as honest, competent persons not to be trifled with (1981: 96).

This 'embarrassment factor' did not appear to underlie any of the 'to' utterances in the data gathered for this study. It was not the case that participants felt their image

was threatened if they refrained from addressing the television (although at certain crucial moments expression of disapproval of characters' actions did seem required by all participants; silence could in these cases perhaps be interpreted as a sanction of the actions).

It is another feature of displays that they do not occur when the speaker is alone (Goffman 1981: 97). While no data involving solitary television viewers was collected, at least some speakers claim to address the television when alone, implying again that talking to the television does not have a display function.

The 'to' utterances, then, are not displays. And yet they must surely be regarded as 'self-talk', or at least as the 'inanimate object' equivalent of self-talk. They are not addressed to an animate other. They receive, in the great majority of cases, no reply (and, in fact, often precede lapses in the conversation; see Section 5). However, utterances adressed to the television do not always remain unanswered. Occasionally they are replied to, and when this occurs, the form of the reply often provides support for the analysis of their function as that of informing other participants of the speaker's views on the relevant character or situation. The respondent replies, in these cases, not to the literal illocutionary force of the utterance, but to the 'informing other viewers' illocutionary force. Thus the 'to' utterances may be regarded as indirect speech acts, with the primary illocutionary force being indirect and the secondary illocutionary force being the literal one (for a similar argument for the case of indirect requests see Searle 1975). An example is given in (5):

(5)   A: *oh come on we never heard of him until now*
        B: yeah I know it's pathetic

As A's utterance in this example was not addressed to B, the 'I know' would be inappropriate unless B is understood to be replying to the indirect illocutionary force of A's utterance, which was that of informing B (and others) of her assessment of the situation. To such a statement of assessment it is appropriate to reply with 'I know'. Example (6) is even more revealing (utterances enclosed in double quotation marks are ones in which the speaker assumes the role of a television character):

(6)   A: *so your family needs you and so you're ignoring them*
        B: yeah

C: "I want to ignore them"

In this example, B responds by agreeing with the indirect (primary) illucutionary force of A's utterance, which is to point out to the other participants the selfishness of the addressed character's behaviour. C responds to the literal (secondary) illocutionary force, and does this by assuming the persona of the character addressed by A.

If, then, the 'to' utterances in the sample were performed with the intention of imparting to other participants the speaker's opinion about the situation, we must wonder what the reason for the previously mentioned television-addressing when alone might be. It is possible, though I have no empirical evidence to support the suggestion, that, when alone, viewers engage in only a subset of the types of utterance addressed to the television when others are present. Specifically, it could be the case that in moments of extreme emotional involvement with the situation on the television, solitary viewers let loose outraged 'explosions' of the sort evidenced in (4).

Utterances spoken 'with' the television

Types of 'with' utterances
Often, when a reply is made to a television character, it is difficult to determine whether the speaker is replying 'as herself', or whether she is assuming the role of another character in her reply. Many utterances however are unambiguously instances of assumption of a character's role, as they involve the use of first person pronouns which identify the speaker as a character in the programme. Some examples:

(7)   "you didn't invite me"
        "well yes I was married to you once"
        "give us the stuff"
        "yum yum we could have shrimp or we could have cheese and
           crackers"

Another indication which helps to determine whether or not the speaker is assuming a character's role is accent. During the Days of our Lives data utterances spoken 'with' the television were often spoken in an American accent.

Function of 'with' utterances
The function of the 'with' utterances appears to be to provide the hearers with information on the speaker's opinion of what the characters might say or think, and to do it in an amusing, entertaining manner. They thus appear to have the same function as very similar utterances prefaced with '(s)he's saying ...', as in (8):

(8)   he's saying 'I know I'm possessive and I know I'm over-
        determined but I love you and I want need to protect you'

But the bald 'with' utterances appear to have more entertainment value than the embedded '(s)he's saying ...' utterances. They have a more direct, immediate impact, and the mere act of assuming a character's role amuses other participants.

The embedded form also appears to be used with more seriously meant indications of what the character might say, while the straight out 'with' utterances are often jokes. They often either ironically point out the stupidity of the character's previous utterance or exaggerate a character's weaknesses, as in (9), said in an exaggeratedly whining voice to emphasise the character's selfishness:

(9)   "yeah why me it's not fair Mom"

The 'with' utterances did not tend to be replied to with overt agreement markers, as the 'to' utterances sometimes were. Agreement with or approval of the speaker's impersonation was generally signified by a continuation or elaboration of the utterance, as in (10) and (11), where in each case B assumes the same character's role A has assumed:

(10)   A: "what was his name again"
        B: "whose son was he"

(11)   A: "yeah why me it's not fair Mom"
        B: "I got my friends"

The 'with' utterances are even less like self-talk than the 'to' utterances. They are intended to amuse other participants, and their utterance by a solitary television viewer would be similar to the solitary telling of jokes to oneself. I have no empirical evidence that this does not occur, but it seems highly unlikely.

Footing

The types of utterances discussed in the previous two sections are marked with respect to their addressee and/or the relationship of the speaker to the utterance. What is going on may be described in terms of 'footing', a notion due to Goffman (1981), which involves the roles of and relationships between the various participants in any exchange (including speaker, addressed recipient and unaddressed recipients(s); see Goffman 1981: 133).

When a speaker addresses the television or speaks as if she were a television character, she changes footing. Goffman describes it thus:

> A change in footing implies a change in the alignment we take up to ourselves and the others present as expressed in the way we manage the production or reception of an utterance (1981: 128).

Change in footing may involve a change in addressee, as with the 'to' utterances, or a change in the speaker's relation to the utterance, as with the 'with' utterances.
So the difference between a reply to a character where the speaker speaks 'as herself' (a 'to' utterance) and a reply to a character where the speaker speaks 'as a character' (a 'with' utterance) is a difference in footing.

Evidence for footing change

It was mentioned in the discussion of 'with' utterances that they were often accompanied by a change of accent. Goffman notes that

> when we shift from saying something ourselves to reporting what someone else said, we are changing our footing ... a code switch sometimes functions as a mark of this shift (1981: 151).

He discusses 'how ... we can convey words that are not our own', and writes that

> we can mock an accent or dialect, projecting a stereotyped figure more in the manner that stage actors do than in the manner that mere quotation provides (1981: 150).

The 'with' utterances are also examples of this phenomenon of 'conveying words that are not our own', even though they are not quotations, but original utterances.

Interestingly, accent switch as an indicator of footing change in these cases is not restricted to a straight imitation of the accent of the characters one is addressing or impersonating. Examples (12) and (13) both occurred during the episode of *Sale of*

the Century. (12) was spoken in an (exaggeratedly) Australian accent, and (13) in an American accent.

(12)   *good one Michelle*

(13)   "did ya have a good time"

There was yet another group of utterances in the data which involved a footing change. These were repetitions of things said on the television. Some examples of things repeated:

(14)   no tears
        Marlena's house
        where's Bo?

These were, during the *Days of our Lives* episodes, without exception in an American accent. Goffman also mentions repetitions, writing that

> For example, if someone repeatedly tells us to shut the window we can finally respond by repeating his words in a strident pitch, enacting a satirical version of his utterance (1981: 150).

The accent switch in the television repetitions shows footing change just as the 'strident pitch' in Goffman's 'shutting the window' example does.

Finally, an example of accent switch, indicating footing change, independent of the utterance being 'to', 'with', or a repetition of, the television, is given in (15). Immediately prior to the exchange in (15), B has laughed knowingly at something that has happened on the programme, and A requests an explanation for the laugh:

(15)   A: what?
        B: where's Bo? (American accent)

Here B is neither addressing the television, nor is she assuming the role of a character in her answer. She is describing what had amused her, which was the fact that several characters had not yet noticed that the character Bo was not present, and would be outraged when they discovered it. The footing change here, demonstrated by the accent switch, lies in the fact that B knows perfectly well where Bo is and is therefore not really asking.

Many utterances during the *Days of our Lives* episodes which were neither repetitions nor 'with's were spoken in American accents. In the context of viewing an American television programme an American accent was obviously the preferred alternative one for code switching.

Thus the utterances addresssed to the television and the utterances spoken 'with' the television are not instances of self-talk, but are directed at other viewers. They provide interesting and often amusing ways of conveying to other viewers the speaker's state of mind or assessment of the situation. They are examples of footing change, and for this reason are often accompanied by accent switch.

Turn Taking

It is clear that the turn-taking behaviour of television viewers differs from that of normal conversation in a variety of ways.

Lapses

Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson write with respect to turn taking in conversation that

> Transitions from one turn to a next with no gap and no overlap between them are common. Together with transitions characterized by slight gap or slight overlap, they make up the vast majority of transitions (1978: 11).

In other words, in a conversation (in our and some other speech communities) there is a tendency for one and only one person to be speaking at all times. Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson's model allows, however, for the fact that sometimes, in conversation, lapses may occur. If the current speaker does not select a next speaker, no other speaker self-selects, and the current speaker does not choose to continue speaking, then a lapse occurs (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson 1978: 13). McLaughlin also writes that 'there is evidence that in the stream of talk the presence of brief periods of silence is commonplace' (1984: 111).

While silences occur, though, it appears to be the case that silences which last for any length of time are dispreferred in conversation. McLaughlin notes that

> switching pauses of a certain length may be experienced by parties as "awkward", in the sense that the absence of talk is perceived as a negative commentary on their respective competencies as communicators and/or the extent to which they are comfortable together (1984: 113).

Goffman also notes that

> Throughout the course of the encounter the participants will be obliged to ... ensure that no long stretch occurs when no one (and not more than one) is taking the floor (1981: 130).

In investigating the turn-taking behaviour of television watchers I endeavoured to determine whether lapses occur more frequently or are permitted to be longer than in 'normal' conversation. I also compared data on lapses for 'programme time' as opposed to 'advertisement time' to determine if behaviour differed between the two.

TABLE 1
Lapses and lapse time

episode	conv time	no. of lapses	lapse time	% lapse time
Days 1				
	41m30s	114	20m15s	49
	15m30s	6	52s	6
Days 2				
	36m30s	91	16m35s	45
	8m30s	14	2m13s	26
Sale				
	24m	56	6m40s	28
	6m30s	8	1m30s	23

The results for number of lapses and lapse time are in Table 1. A lapse is defined, following McLaughlin (1984: 115) as an extended silence (one of three seconds or more) at a transition relevance place. 'Conv time' refers to the total possible time for conversation during either programme or advertisements respectively. '% lapse time' refers to the percentage of the total 'conv time' which was spent in lapses. This is of course not equal to the total time spent in silence. All figures are approximate, and must be regarded as giving only a very general indication of times. It is, however, possible to extract general patterns from the data.

The longest lapse in any of the three episodes was 44 seconds. While advertisements produced fewer lapses than the programme in all cases, it can be seen that the percentage lapse time varied significantly over the three episodes, producing no clear pattern. In particular, there was far more lapse time during both

the *Days* episode programme times than during the *Sale* episode, and an extremely low lapse time of 6% during the advertisements of *Days 1*.

This lack of a clear pattern relates, I believe, to certain variable factors in the recordings, and reflects also the smallness of the sample. The higher lapse time during *Days of our Lives* episodes could be due to the nature of the programme. During a soap opera, with viewers who are regular watchers, there is likely to be more incentive to catch all that is going on than during a quiz show which obviously has no story line. This claim that programme type is relevant could be tested by a larger sample involving more programmes. The extremely low percentage lapse time for the advertisements in *Days 1* was due to the fact that one participant arrived half way through the programme and was 'caught up' quickly during advertisement breaks on what had happened so far.

The higher instance, in all episodes, of lapses during the programme time as opposed to the advertisement time indicates that lapse behaviour is different while watching the programme from in 'normal' conversation, for it is unlikely that the opposite is the case - that the 'programme' behaviour was normal, and that participants allow fewer lapses during advertisements than in conversation when there is no television on. As there is no 'normal' conversation lapse data with which to compare the results obtained here, no claim can be made about whether the advertisements produced more lapses than normal conversation; we can only say that it at least approximated more closely to 'normal' conversation behaviour than did programme time behaviour.

Why are more lapses permissable during the conversation of television viewers than in normal conversation? Why do these lapses not appear to produce the embarrassment they would in a normal conversation? Goffman discusses the fact that

> In canonical talk, the participants seem to share a focus of cognitive concern - a common subject matter - but less simply so a common focus of visual attention (1981: 140).

He notes that in some instances of talk there is some object of visual attention, physical activity, or common task in which interlocutors are involved, and that such situations lead to non-normal conversational behaviour, including longer periods of silence. In fact, he writes that in such situations 'conversation is not really the context of the utterance' (1981: 141), and 'coordinated task activity - not conversation - is what lots of words are part of' (1981: 143). McLaughlin also

mentions a common activity as a factor relevant to silence permissability; she specifically excludes from her definition of 'lapse' 'silence that co-occurs with activity by one or both of the parties' (1984: 115), and notes that 'interactive silences are not troublesome provided that they are covered with some activity' (1984: 113).

So is television viewing an 'activity'? It may be. The television affects turn-taking behaviour to the extent that lapses are much more permissable than in normal conversation, and television viewing as such is regarded as sufficiently important to allow participants to specifically refer to it as a reason for not talking, evidenced by two instances of 'sssh' in the data.[1] It is also significant that even when nearly 50% of the time is lapse time the participants do not feel embarrassed, or that the conversation is inadequate. This was demonstrated by my intuitions on initially listening to the recorded data; the impression was gained that participants talked practically non-stop during the programme, which impression, upon examination, was found to be false. This shows that the television-watching conversation does not strike participants as being 'full of silences', even when it is.[2]

Such factors imply that television viewing should be regarded as an 'activity'. Yet actively watching the television does not preclude conversation; for at least half the programme time during all episodes participants engaged in what even by Goffman's definition would presumably be called conversation. Whether or not television viewing is an 'activity' appears to depend entirely on whether or not the viewers choose to regard it as one. It may substitute for conversation, licensing lapses, but at other times is no bar to spans of normal conversation.

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[1] Compare here with Goffman's discussion of self-talk as not 'constituting an official claim upon its sender-recipient' and the consequent impossibility of saying 'I'm sorry, I can't come right now, I'm busy talking to myself' (1981:81).

[2] Upon initially listening to the tapes I was amazed that participants managed to hear any of the programme at all, considering they talked for so much of the time. It seems, however, that viewers are able to some extent to talk and listen at the same time; one viewer 'caught up' others on a bit they had missed - and the bit she caught them up on was one during which she herself had been talking! 'Keeping up' is a cooperative venture; see below for examples of viewers filling in others on parts they have missed.

Single Utterances

Another feature of 'normal' conversation appears to be the lack of single utterances to which no reply is made. For example, Stubbs defines 'exchange' as 'the minimal interactive unit, comprising at least an initiation (I) from one speaker and response (R) from another' (1983: 104). It was therefore interesting to note the relatively frequent occurrence in the data of single utterances. An example of one passage where four such utterances occur is given in (16) (numbers in brackets following utterances refer to seconds of lapse).

(16) A: "where's Bo?" (35)
      B: *what did you say to Bo?* (8)
      B: oh no and here's Liz oh (9)
      B: *that's a sore point Liz* (20)

It is fairly common for utterances which receive no reply to be either 'to' or 'with' the television, and I believe this is also relevant to the high number of lapses in the data. Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson write that 'A variety of constraints may operate on the possible placement of lapses' (1978: 27), such as that if the current speaker selects next speaker within a turn, no lapse can properly follow that turn (only 'a pause before the next speaker's turn beginning' (1978: 27)). And McLaughlin looks at the types of utterances which occur immediately prior to lapses, and finds that it is relevant whether a particular utterance 'contribute[s] to topic advancement' (1984: 116). Thus she finds that lapses are often preceded by minimal responses or 'formulations' (in the sense of Garfinkel and Sacks 1970, see McLaughlin 1984: 117). So it may be the case that 'television type' conversation, containing as it does high numbers of 'to' and 'with' utterances, involves fewer utterances which select the next speaker than does normal conversation, and that 'to' and 'with' utterances fail to contribute to topic advancement. This would explain both the occurrence of single utterances and the high number of lapses in television-watchers' conversation.

Conversational topic choice

To test to what extent the television was a determiner of topic choice, I counted the number of speaker turns occurring in each of three major groups: turns which involved topics unrelated to the television programme being watched, turns which were about topics relating to the television programme, and turns directly involved with the television programme (this last group comprised utterances addressed to

the television, utterances spoken 'with' the television, and repetitions of television utterances). 'Turn' is defined here as everything a speaker says in an uninterrupted period of talk, except that minimal responses are not counted as turns (or interrupters). An analysis in terms of time spent on each of these groups may, of course, produce different results.

TABLE 2
Turns 'to' and 'with' the TV and TV-topic-related turns

	N	T/W	A	TOT	%TV
Days 1					
prog	24	32	272	328	93
ads	69	4	130	203	66
Days 2					
prog	102	79	284	465	78
ads	48	1	34	83	42
Sale					
prog	60	44	176	280	79
ads	71	1	27	99	28

The results are given in Table 2. 'N' means turns which were about topics unrelated to the television programme being watched (although this group includes turns about other television programmes), 'T/W' means turns 'to' or 'with' the television (including repetitions), 'A' means turns about topics related to the television programme being watched, 'TOT' means total number of turns and '%TV' means the percentage of total turns which were in any way related to the television (T/W and A turns).

The figures for percentage of turns which were about topics relating to the television are probably conservative for 'active viewers', as it was difficult to control the recordings to exclude non-viewers from sometimes being in the room. For example, during *Days 2*, where 78% of turns during the programme were television-related, there was one non-viewer in the room. Of the 22% non-

television-related turns, which could be divided into discussion of 11 topics, the non-viewer introduced 5 topics and the other three active viewers introduced 6. So among active viewers there is an even greater taboo on discussing non-related topics.

The television also affected topic choice to a greater extent than is reflected in Table 2 in that topics which were classed as 'N' were often inspired by the television, which led viewers by a process of association to other topics. For example, an advertisement involving a well-known New Zealander led to a discussion of his private life and career.

Within 'television related' topics the following major types of utterance were found:

> questions about the programme, exemplified in (17)
> anecdotes about past episodes, exemplified in (18)
> judgements of characters, particularly of their appearance,
> and usually critical, exemplified in (19)
> filling in other participants on bits of the programme
> missed, exemplified in (20)
> directing others' attention to the programme, exemplified
> in (21).

(17) *questions about the programme*
> does she get on with Anna
> and is she getting married to anyone
> and was it him who used to beat up Tess or her father who used to
> beat up Tess
> how long have Roman and Marlena been married

(18) *anecdotes about past episodes*
> A: I can remember one episode when he w- he was acting
> really weird but it this was about 3 months into the story
> B: there was there was a lion who was the one with the lion
> do you remember seeing it then
> A: no
> B: there was a woman with a lion pet and the str- strangler was
> staying with her and she didn't know he was the strangler and that was
> her nephew or something and she had a pet lion of all things

(19) *judgements of characters*
> that woman is so dizzy she is just so irritating I hate her
> that is the worst jersey I've seen in my life
> she hasn't got any brains
> what is Judith wearing that looks really gross too
> oh hell Alice is looking old oh they shouldn'ta given her that
> close-up no way
> what a dreadful haircut Marlena's got there

(20) *filling in other participants on bits of the programme missed*
> well, 'cause she said 'I wish I had a house of my own' and he said
> 'what about Tony's house?' and she said 'well no, 'cause
> Jasmine's there, and Hirshel's there'
> he said to her 'if you need me, I'll be here' and she said 'I'll
> always need you'

(21) *directing others' attention to the programme*
> look at that shirt
> did you see those shoes
> look at that woman's buxomness
> look at all those look at that horrible lot of pimples

The 'A' turns which occurred during the advertisements were about both the programme and the ads themselves; in the latter case they were also usually criticisms.

It is immediately noticeable from Table 2 that conversation was overwhelmingly about the television programme being watched. The difference between 'programme' behaviour and 'advertisements' behaviour is also striking. It may appear intuitively obvious that talk during the advertisement breaks tends to be less 'programme oriented' than talk during the programme itself. It is, however, interesting when seen in conjunction with the turn-taking behaviour discussed above, in that it helps to determine the nature of the restriction on conversation during television viewing. It was noted with regard to lapses that the programme was treated to some extent as an activity, licensing lapses, while the advertisements did so, if at all, to a lesser extent. Table 2 indicates that the programme also acts as the 'focus point' Goffman mentions, not only affecting turn-taking behaviour but also dictating topic choice.

Conclusion

People talk to the television. When they do so, however, they are not usually doing so for either their own or the television's benefit, but rather their utterances are directed at other viewers. Addressing an utterance to the television provides an immediate and interesting way of conveying to other viewers one's reaction to events or characters. Similarly, viewers often assume the role of a television character, speaking 'with' the television. In this way they point out inconsistencies and weaknesses in plot and characters, and amuse fellow watchers.

Even when not addressing or speaking with the television, the conversation of viewers is overwhelmingly about the programme being watched. Thus the television functions as a focus point, directing viewers' topic choice. It may also, if viewers choose to regard it as such, act as an 'activity', in the sense of Goffman (1981) and McLaughlin (1984), licensing silences in the conversation.

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'Don't try and make out that I'm nice!'
The different strategies women and men use when gossiping*

Jane Pilkington

Abstract

This paper attempts to define and describe some of the features of gossip. On the basis of data collected in single sex groups, differences in the gossip of the men and the women are identified and discussed. Although the aims of the men's and the women's gossip appeared to be similar, ie. expressing solidarity and group membership, the strategies adopted to achieve these aims were quite different. While the women tended to use positive politeness strategies, the men appeared to operate within the context of the Mateship Culture, and used far more aggressive ways of interacting.

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Introduction

Research on gossip has tended to concentrate on identifying the gossip genre rather than providing an empirical analysis of the genre. Ervin-Tripp (1964) provides a framework for discussion which has been followed by others (eg Jones 1980), and it will prove useful in describing the existing research in the area. She identifies five parameters for describing gossip: participants, setting, form, topic and function. In addition it will be useful to consider attitudes to gossip.

Participants

When a group of people meets and begins to gossip, the size of the group can range from two people to several. While Gluckman (1963: 315) points out that gossip is not entirely confined to being a small group activity, Jones (1980: 194) notes that gossip is an intimate style of language. Most researchers appear to agree that gossip generally occurs between participants who are on close terms, and that the better they know one another the more likely it is that gossip will occur. Jones (1975: 13) suggests this is because gossip reflects common experiences, shared values and frequent contact. Gossip does not occur between strangers. It occurs only as participants get to know and trust one another and build up a body of shared experiences and attitudes. Gluckman (1963: 312) cites Frankenberg's experiences as an anthropologist studying a small Welsh village. At first he finds day-to-day interactions with the villagers such as buying a loaf of bread take a short time. As the anthropologist is accepted into the community the amount of time he spends gossiping during such transactions increased.

Setting

Because gossip reflects intimacy, the setting in which gossip occurs is usually an informal or intimate one, such as someone's home or a place where the participants feel comfortable. The setting influences the topic in that family gossip is likely to occur in a family setting and work gossip in a work setting and village gossip is likely to be discussed within the village.

Gossip is not confined to face-to-face interaction. Jones (1975: 40) points out that gossip is a style that characterises women's private and public writings such as gossip columns, household hints pages, anecdotal letters in magazines and so forth. Gossip also occurs in private letters and in telephone conversations.

Brenneis (1984: 492) and Jones (1975: 9) note that times of the day when gossip is most likely to occur are times when the participants have completed their work or are taking a break from it. The time in which gossip takes place is often personal time.

Form

Both Jones (1980: 196) and Brenneis (1984: 491) comment that gossip in the communities that they are concerned with is marked by special features that denote intimacy. The feature that they both draw attention to is the tendency to rely on strategies of indirectness. Gossip is often made up of veiled references and draws

upon shared knowledge. This means that gossip will often be unintelligible to the outsider who does not share the knowledge that is being drawn upon by the interlocuters. Jones adds that the outsider may also find it difficult to interpret gossip due to the use of paralinguistic devices in replies, such as raised eyebrows, pursed lips, sighs, or silences.

Brenneis, Jones and Gluckman all point out that due to the allusive nature of gossip, participants must come to the group with an understanding of what is going on. In the gossip style of the Fijian Indian village of Bhatgaon, for instance, the subject is often not identifed but is referred to obliquely (Brenneis 1984). This is a strategy that I have also noted in some New Zealand magazine gossip columns such as Felicity Ferret's column in *Metro*.

Another feature that has been noted is the serial nature of gossip. Jones (1975:7) points out that gossip will repeatedly return to specific events or people and the gossip will be up-dated in the light of the latest news. Within a gossip exchange reference will often be made to earlier exchanges. A story does not finish; it is continuously being added to and reanalyzed.

Related to this is the way in which gossip is a form in which several participants may contribute to the telling of a story. As Coates (1988) illustrates, gossip can be a cooperative production to which a number of partcipants contribute in a kind of polyphonic style. Brenneis (1984) also notes that there is very rarely a single performer in this style of speech in the Fijian village where he obseved. Other participants are expected to contribute to the construction of the narrative. Overlaps between speakers often occur and these serve to add to the continuity between the two speakers. This feature he describes as 'co-participation' but it is interesting to note that this co-participation is not entirely cooperative. The joint performance of this style is 'simultaneously competitive and cooperative' (Brenneis 1984: 495).

Topic

Possible topics for gossip are wide ranging. Topics can range from the highly personal to public property, from personal feelings through to the activities of the famous and infamous. Gossip may focuss on the doings of an absent party. These are the types of discussion that Brenneis (1984) and Gluckman (1963) analyse. Jones (1975, 1980) and Coates (1988), however, focus on gossip that discusses the participants' personal experiences and feelings. Of the four categories of

gossip that Jones outlines (1980: 196), only one includes discussions focussed upon the doings of others.

Function

The basic function of gossip can be seen as signifying group membership. To be fully part of a group you must be able to understand and participate in the gossip of that group (Gluckman 1963: 309).

Gossip within groups can play a conservative role in maintaining morals and unity. Competing groups within the community can also be controlled by gossip, or gossip may serve to mark the community as distinct from a larger group. In order to avoid being gossiped about members of the community must live their lives within the moral code of the community.

In a group under threat such as the Makah Indians (Gluckman 1963: 311 citing Colson 1953), the distinctive Makah traditions are kept alive through gossip. As each person seeks to claim a greater status within the community by claiming to be more Makah than other members of the community, others must retaliate by being able to refute that person's claim while building up a claim of their own. Through this constant gossiping the knowledge of the history and traditions of a distinctive minority are kept alive.

This also illustrates the fact that gossip has a levelling function. Anyone gaining too much power or overstepping their role leaves themselves open to be gossiped about. Gossip may also enable gossipers to covertly assert their status. By assessing the behaviour of others, a gossiper can demonstrate their own position in relation to the person they are gossiping about.

Gossip can enable groups to have differences of opinion while at the same time presenting a united front to outsiders. Since gossip is carried out within a community and in such a way that outsiders may not be able to recognize some of the vicious barbs, outsiders may see a united group while animosities are worked out behind the scenes.

Gossip is also entertaining. Gluckman (1963: 313) states that gossip is enjoyed by people in close social relationships with one another. It is a form of entertainment open only to group members. It is a considerable faux-pas for an outsider to gossip about a group member while insiders are free to gossip about their friends and

enemies without censure. Outsiders will not be able to derive the same enjoyment from gossip as group members due to the strategies of indirectness already mentioned.

Attitudes

It is interesting to note that in spite of the enjoyment that groups derive from gossip and the positive light in which all the above writers approach the style, gossip is generally downgraded or condemned by any community. Gossip is largely seen as worthless and has low social prestige; Jones (1975: 10) comments that it tends to be resticted to low prestige settings.

Jones (1980: 195) also points out that men see women's gossip as a threat and try to discourage it. Perhaps the cohesive power that gossip has in small groups makes the powerful groups of society nervous. The general belief that gossip is trivial is perhaps derived from the intimacy that characterizes gossip. In any society it is the large scale events that are seen as important. Gossip as an intimate style occurring in informal settings is seen as small scale and receives little attention.

From these observations, it is possible to define gossip as characterised by the following features:

1) Gossip is focused on the personal rather than global, private rather then public.
2) Gossip is widely regarded as trivial yet is valued by individuals.
3) Gossip is entertaining and enjoyable.
4) Gossip occurs in a sympathetic environment, among friends and intimates not strangers.
5) There is probably an upper limit on the size of a group involved in gossip; the lower limit is two.
6) The smaller and closer the group the more personal and probing the gossip will be.
7) Gossip is ephemeral and has limited interest outside the participating group.

I then set out to explore features of gossip in the interactions of single sex groups of New Zealand women and men.

Method

I recorded two different all-female groups and two all-male groups. The female groups consisted of (i) the women whom I was flatting with and our frends (ii) the women I worked with in a bakery.

My women in my flat and the friends visiting when I taped were all known to one another except for Fr and Ls who had not met previously, but were both known by all the other participants and had heard of each other previously. All participants were university students from similar socio-economic backgrounds aged between 20 and 25 years.

The women I worked with were aged 34-43. Again all the participants knew one another but, apart from me, the socio-economic background of the members of this group was somewhat lower than that of the first group.

Taping all-male groups was more difficult since there was a particularly problematic version of the observer's paradox to overcome: if I was present the group was no longer an all male group, yet if I wasn't present who would do the taping? My solution was to ask the group of men that I worked with at the bakery if I could tape them. I told them when I was beginning taping and then I left the room. I left the tape running for most of one day and for a shorter period on a second day. I hoped this would result in the participants gradually forgetting its presence as well as my role as a future female overhearer. This strategy was very successful. Wariness of the tape recorder gradually diminished over the two days.

On the first day there were four participants present aged between 20 and 25 years. On the second occasion there were 5 participants present aged between 20 and 39. All the participants knew each other and had all left school after either the sixth or seventh form and had a similar socio-economic background.

The differences between the data collected from the two groups of women (one at home and one at work) turned out to be slight. The different ages and educational background of the participants, and the different environments in which the data was recorded did not seem to be result in any great differences in the gossip style. On the whole the women seemed to talk about similar things and use similar strategies. The strategies that I attribute to women in my analysis of the data are thus strategies that were used by both groups of women.

The taping produced about 250 minutes of data from the female groups, and 210 minutes of usable data from the male group. From this, using the list of criteria outlined above, I selected small sections of gossip .

Results

The female groups: cooperative talk

One very clear feature of the interaction of the female groups was the large degree of positively oriented involvement that the different speakers had in each conversation. Instead of finding that one speaker spoke for a time while the others listened, and then another person spoke while everybody else listened, I found that while one speaker might be taking the central talk role, the other participants were continuously contributing. It was rare for a speaker to talk alone for more than about 30-35 words.

The more interesting and exciting the participants found the conversation, the more often they would . contribute, and the more feedback they would provide. Often laughter was more frequent and more general, and the volume and speed at which the speakers spoke increased. In such episodes, the length of turn of each participant was extremely short. This can be seen in example 1 from the home setting where three of the participants are discussing a character in *Days of Our Lives* , a TV programme with which they were much absorbed.

(In the transcribed conversations the following symbols are used to join sections of simultaneous speech or latched speech: ⌈ ⌊ Capitals are used to indicate strong stress.

Example 1
May: ⌈
Sal: | who's this?
Pam: ⌊
Sal: reprobate!   oh it's ⌈
May: ⌊ friend of Sean's
Pam: (sing song) Kimberly's client.
Sal: oh yuk!
May: what what what!
Pam: one of Kimberly's clients

May: what does she do?
Pam: she's a whore
May: is she?
Pam: yes!
May: Kimberly?
Pam: shocking eh
May: do they know
Pam: no nobody knows
Sal: ⌈really?
May: ⌊really?
Sal: that old reprobate, look and a friend of the father's too   ohhhh!
May: wild! is she still being a whore now?
Pam: Linda forced her back into it
May: oh my Gooood

Most of the turns are no more than 3 words long with the longest turn only 10 words long. The speech was very rapid and there were no pauses beween participants' turns.

Example 2 is taken from the interaction in the work group at a similar point of extreme interest for the participants. The women are talking about a series of road accidents that happened on the motorway nearby that morning.

Example 2
Liz: I thought you'd be stuck in that thing Jen. there was just a
      big crash at the end of Tawa
Jen: yes yes ⌈I know
Liz: ⌊that's why I came a bit earlier
Jen: um well actually there must have been a crash just aft-
      there was a prang up which I went through
Liz: yeah they said it was (.....)
Jen: really well
Sal: Liz had visions of ⌈you in there! (laughing)
Liz: ⌊yes well (laughing)
Jen: that'll be why they rang up from John's work
Sal: did they?
Liz: yeah yes

Jen: just as I was leaving they were ringing up for ⌈John but I said
      that he |
Sal: ⌊oh
Jen: left just after seven o'clock
Sal: oh right so they would have all heaved a sigh of relief!

While the turns are not as short as in example 1, there are still many different turns in a short space of time with little pausing between each turn.

Short turns with minimal pauses between are one indication of involvement. Another feature of the women's involvement in each other's talk was the amount of encouraging feedback they provided to each other, and the ways in which they extended each other's topics. In example 3, the two participants, who are watching *Days of Our Lives*, are not showing a great amount of interest in the issue of Marlene's age. The turns are longer, the pauses between turns are longer, and there is little feedback. However, once the topic of *Our House* comes up, the time between turns drops and the amount of feedback increases.

Example 3
Pat: how old's Marlene?
Pause of several seconds
Sal: um...she must be in her 30's, she's been married to Don
Pause of several seconds
Sal: if not in her 40's because in that *Our House* um.......she's the mother
      of teenage kids   ⌈and she
Pat: ⌊oh yeah that's an awful program isn't it
Sal: mmmm
Pat: it's got that dick who's in the Cocoon film
Sal: oh god he's insufferable!
Pat: and he's so fucking wise ⌈and so so FUCKING American
Sal: ⌊yeah
Sal: and everybody else is always WRONG
Pat: yes and he's always right...

This example shows that female speakers not only contribute feedback to their interlocuters, but also actively contribute to the development of their interlocuter's topic. When Pat replies to Sal's comment 'Oh god he's insufferable' she begins

with 'and' in effect conjoining her comment to Sal's earlier comment. When Sal follows up Pat's comment she too uses 'and' to begin her utterance, conjoining it to Pat's preceding comment. Both Pat and Sal are using the same American accents in these conjoined turns, another indication that they are both telling the same story and see themselves as sharing the same role. Example 4 provides a further illustration of these strategies for signalling positive involvement and support for other speakers.

Example 4

```
Sal:   perhaps next time I see B I'll PUMP him for information...
       ⌈so B tell me
May: ⌊           the goss
Sal: ⌈I know it's about six years old but
May: ⌊                      (laugh) but I'd forgotten it
```

May indicates her agreement with Sal's comments by finishing them for her or by carrying on with them. Sal makes the opportunity available to her the first time by trailing off. May provides an end to Sal's utterance and Sal continues her utterance but breaks it when she reaches the conjunction 'but', allowing May to continue the utterance for her. This example could plausibly have been spoken by one speaker only. This sharing of turns is clearly done with the approval of both participants. May having finished one of Sal's utterances then pauses and allows Sal to continue. Sal then creates another opportunity for May to join in which May laughingly takes. The two are both enjoying the contributions of the other they are sharing the right to speak rather than competing for it. There is no sense that Sal is being 'interrupted'. Rather the discourse is very clearly a joint production.

Another interesting cooperative interactive strategy is illustrated in example 5, a joint story-telling by May and Sal. They are telling Pam the story of Liz and Neil's latest fight from the previous episode of *Days of our Lives*. May contributes to Sal's narrative by adding excited 'oh's at various points which serve to underline and enforce the entertainment value of this story.

Example 5

```
Sal:   yeah he kicked Carlo out and said he had to get out in five
       seconds or he was [May: ohh!] going to KILL him [May: ohhh!] and
       he said that if um Liz wanted to bonk him she'd have to go to
       a CHEAP [May: ohhh! ] HOTEL LIKE ALL THE REST OF THE WHORES!
```

```
May: ohhh ohhh ohhh!     (general laughter)
```

As already mentioned the amount of feedback that the women give one another increases in proportion to the amount of enjoyment they are deriving from this point of the conversation. As the enjoyment and interest increases, the feedback increases. This feedback is often in the form of minimal responses although lengthier responses will often also be used. These responses often seem to be used by the listeners as a prompt to the speakers as if to say 'yes please carry on'. In example 6, for instance, Sal introduces a new topic and identifies the subject of the gossip as Roz's mother. She then locates the gossip in terms of when the event took place. If May had not remembered the time or the person that Sal was referring to, I think she would have put a question in at this point such as 'who?' or 'when was this?' By making a positive minimal response she effectively indicates that she has nothing to say here, and that the story can continue. Sal having received the prompt then goes on to reveal the complicating action without seeing any need to give any further background.

Example 6

```
Sal:   like Roz's mother, one of the times that oh that time I went to Himitangi
       ⌈with  the family     and she was going on like.....
May: ⌊              yeah
```

Sometimes a speaker will complete their turn and one of the other participants will use a minimal response to prompt the speaker to continue with the story. Example 7 is a particularly clear instance of this. Sal and Pat are discussing a person whom they both disapprove of. Sal has to get up and leave the room. She is in the process of leaving when Pat stops speaking. Sal prompts Pat to continue and Pat gets up and follows Sal out of the room continuing from her previous turn. Sal's prompt has served to encourage Pat to continue. Pat has felt that Sal was so interested in hearing more that she has followed Sal so that the gossip can continue while Sal is preparing lunch out of the room.

Example 7

```
Pat:   exactly and he commands two thousand dollars a shot as
       an after dinner speaker
Sal:   yeah? (while leaving room)
Pat:   yeah, and that's a lot (.....)(leaves room continuing
       conversation)
```

Minimal responses are not the only feedback that participants use to encourage the speaker to continue. Sometimes the other participants will use questions about what the speaker was talking about to get them to continue with their narrative. The speaker will also use these questions as a guide to what the other participants are interested in hearing. In example 8, Pam has questioned the other participants about a previous episode of *Days of Our Lives*. Sal has been describing the scene Pam had asked about, but stops the narrative when May joins in. The narrative, however, does not continue so Pam asks another question to prompt the continuation of the narrative.

Example 8
Sal: yeah like they were sort of you know lying there on top of one another it
      was oh quite crude⌈oh
May: ⌊so we presume
Sal: yeah we kind of presume
Pam: yeuk
Sal: but yeah
Pam: so has he moved out?
Sal: yeah he kicked Carlo out he said.....

Echoing or repeating each other's comments was another strategy that the women used as a means of showing agreement. In example 9, May is retelling a story that was told to her by a woman she knows.

Example 9
May: ...and they used to go to this youth group and all be all over each other in
      1920 or whenever
Pam: ⌈eugh
Sal: ⌊eugh
May: and then um.. er...then one day she was sick so the boyfriend took it upon
      ˙himself to ask her cousin out eughh
Pam: ⌈eughh
Sal: ⌊eughh

Sal and Pam make *yuk*-type noises (represented as *eugh(h)*) when May mentions the young couple's physical relationship. When May continues the story she makes a similar noise when another physical relationship is implied. Pam and Sal

follow this noise with similar noises of their own thus indicating agreement with May's reaction and even the reaction of the woman whom the story is about.

A more articulate example of repetition with expansion of the previous speaker's point can be seen in example 10 when Sal and Liz are discussing the fate of a character in a film they saw.

Example 10
Liz: well I'm amazed he survived I thought he'd have died
Sal: yes died of blood loss or ⌈something like that
Liz: ⌊yes it's a wonder he didn't haemorrhage

Liz expresses surprise that the character didn't die. Sal develops this by agreeing, and stating what she thought that the character would have died of. Liz follows this comment by expressing surprise that the character did not die in the way that Sal had guessed he might.

Even when they disagree, the women do so in an indirect way consistent with their cooperative and generally supportive approach to interaction. A speaker would question the previous speaker's utterance, for instance, without explicitly stating that they disagreed with the statement. Example 11 illustrates this strategy. Sal, May and Pam are talking about the number of fur coats currently seen on *Days of Our Lives*. May says that Marlene was wearing one in the previous episode.

Example 11
Sal: oh was Marlene wearing one?
Pam: oh my God!

 Sal's question indicates surprise, but invites May to elaborate. Pam supports Sal's question by also expressing surprise at the idea of Marlene wearing a fur coat. Sal and Pam have thus indirectly expressed their disbelief at May's statement but have not stated that they disagrees with May. May takes up the invitation to elaborate and describes the coat finishing her description with a rising intonation which may function as an invitation to Sal and Pam to comment further, while also perhaps indicating tentativeness. All three speakers, then, have tried to play down the disagreement.

From these examples it can be seen that in general the women are cooperatively involved in the enterprise of joint talk. They take short turns with little pausing. They also support one another with their responses. They provide positive minimal feedback, and they ask questions to indicate that they are interested in and are understanding what the speaker is saying. Often several speakers will echo a point or an expression used by a previous speaker. Sometimes the women complete each other's turns, or collaborate to produce a joint text by adding to what the previous speaker has just said, effectively indicating agreement with the previous utterance. As presented in print some of these responses and supportive turns may appear to be interruptions, but it is quite clear from the recording that the function of the latched and overlapping turns is quite the opposite of disruptive.

The strongest feeling I got from this data was a feeling of cooperation and sharing. The woman were talking to one another sharing opinions and views and providing one another with encouragement.

The male groups: uncooperative talk?
The male talk was very different from the female talk in a variety of ways. Perhaps the most noticeable feature of the recordings of the male groups were the long silences. Silences during the women's recordings were fairly short. The males by contrast seemed to spend a great deal more of the time that they spent together *not* talking. Several minutes could elapse before someone would say something. At first I thought this might relate to the work environment but the recording of the women in exactly the same work environment did not have such lengthy silences.

There were also much longer pauses between turns, even when it seemed to me that the speaker expected or even invited a response by using tags or questioning intonation. The response was often slow in coming and sometimes it never came. Example 12 illustrates this pattern. Ben is discussing his wife's relative sporting strengths.

Example 12
Ben: I think she has a certificate for swimming a mile...that's a
       bloody long swim isn't it?
Pause of about 5-10 seconds
Ben: she has a life saving certificate.....

Ben invites Sam to join the conversation by using a tag question. Sam however makes no comment so Ben continues. Ben did not seem to think that there was anything unusual about Sam's lack of response. There was no evidence that the men found lack of response or feedback from the other men unusual or upsetting. This is further illustrated in example 13. Jim has been singing a song that was used in a television commercial that was screened several years ago.

Example 13
Jim: remember that Wales ad!
Pause of about 5-10 seconds
Jim: (laughing) obviously nobody does.

Jim asks if anyone remembers that commercial. Nobody replies. Jim eventually laughingly comments on this but he seems to find the lack of response amusing rather than annoying.

I think that a similar lack of response in female gossip would indicate extreme lack of interest. The silence in example 13, for instance, would not have been allowed to continue for so long in the female groups. One of the participants would have given some form of feedback, even if only to say that she didn't remember or to ask which commercial was being talked about. Jim however takes silence as a response in itself. It is only when he makes the assertion that nobody remembers that any response is made, and then there is still a pause of about 5 seconds before it comes.

The men seemed to be far more willing to continue talking without verbal feedback than the women were. As mentioned above, the women seldom spoke for a long period without receiving any verbal response, and would often pause and only continue when some feedback was given as a prompt. The men by contrast could carry on long monologues with very long pauses between utterances. At one point, for instance, Ben spends about 5 minutes talking about fishing in fits and starts with very long pauses between each utterance. None of the other males make any comment on this at all. The monologue continues until one of the other males asks a question related to fishing but not directly related to the previous utterance.

A less extreme version of this use of monologues can be seen in example 14 when Jim continues to talk about the old television commercial and then begins to talk

about another old commercial without receiving any of feedback from any of the other males.

Example 14

Jim: ...that kid walks into the bank with the piggy bank under
his arm looking real mean...*(pause of about 5 seconds)*...we
used to all come home from school singing that song...dad
wasn't to pleased eh...*(pause of about 10 seconds)*...then
that zip-zap National Bank visa ad came on and we all started
singing that..*(pause of less than 5 seconds)* dad was all real
happy about that

Another feature that characterized my male data that was not present in my female data was the occurrence of frequent, direct, and repeated expression of disagreement or hostility. The men often openly disagreed with one another. They seemed to have several different strategies for doing this.

Example 15 illustrates one such strategy. Ben has been talking about the intelligence of fish.

Example15

Ben: .....and ah they're very smart
Dan: well then how come they keep getting caught all the time?
Sam: maybe that's why they   ⌈(....)
Ben: ⌊ they don't Dan. you've got to be
really clever to pull one you know

Dan challenges Ben's point of view by questioning it. He asks how fish can be seen as intelligent if they are always getting caught. Ben responds to this by disagreeing with the challenge, thus defending his beliefs and attacking the truth of Dan's argument. There are two different strategies for disagreement in this example: firstly questioning the other's proposition and secondly negating the other's proposition.

Another strategy the males used for disagreeing was to make a statement that conflicted with the previous speaker's statement. In example 16, Sam and Jim are talking about the problems they have been having with one of the machines.

Example 16

Sam: I came in Saturday and turned it on and it started to run
very hot
Jim: Ben turned it on

Sam and Ben cannot have both turned on the same machine so Jim disagrees with Sam's account of events. He doesn't openly challenge Sam's statement, however, he simply makes a statement that is in conflict with one of Sam's statements.

Another very common strategy that male's used for expressing disagreement was criticism. This criticism was often strong enough to be considered abusive. By either criticizing the person who had made an earlier comment, or criticizing some aspect of the comment, the men could express their opposing viewpoint. In example 17, Ray and Dan have been discussing different lexical items used in Australia and New Zealand. Dan has mentioned *Esky*. Ray claims that everyone uses the word *Esky*. He then asks Dan what word he uses.

Example 17

Ray: what do you call an Esky?
Dan: chilly bin
Ray: huh another one another fuckhead.

Here Ray makes a criticism and then increases its force. He uses *huh* indicating by the tone of voice that he thinks that those who don't use the word *Esky* are deficient, and then makes the criticism stronger by using the word *fuckhead*.

Similarly in example 18, Sam and Ray have made an issue out of whether apples are kept in cases or crates. What follows is a burst of quite vicious-sounding abuse which the participants do not seem to take personally as the conversation then quite suddenly changes from mutual abuse to another topic.

Example 18

Ray: crate!
Sam: case!
Ray: what
Sam: they come in cases Ray not crates
Ray: oh same thing if you must be picky over every one thing.

Sam: just shut your fucking head Ray!

Ray: don't tell me to fuck off fuck(....)

Sam: I'll come over and shut yo

Jim: *(Laughingly using a thick sounding voice)* yeah I'll have a
crate of apples thanks

Ray: no fuck off Jim

Jim: (A dozen...)

Dan: *(amused)* shitpicker!

Ray: *(laughing to another person not participating in this exchange)* I'm
sorry I yelled at...what's yer name?

In the free-for-all abuse session illustrated in this example Sam criticizes Ray, Ray criticizes Sam, Jim criticizes Ray and Dan criticizes Jim. Yet no one seems to take the criticisms too seriously. There were several smaller such exchanges in my data; yet these people all continued after such abuse to work alongside each other and to talk with each other without any evidence of hard feelings. Indeed the participants in these sessions seem to be quite enjoying themselves and the exchanges. Jim is laughing when he criticizes Ray, and Dan sounds amused rather than angry. The fact that Ray suddenly changes topic and addressee and begins to laugh indicates that he isn't taking the abuse as a genuine threat.

It is interesting to note how direct and specific the male criticism was. Critical comments were addressed to others by name. The men made quite explicit who they were referring to. This appeared to me to increase the force of the criticism and make it more of a threat. A critical comment cannot possibly be interpreted as a general criticism when it has been addressed to one person.

The sudden change of topic that occurs in example 18 is not unusual in my data. The topics that the men discuss do not seem to be linked as clearly as the topics that the women discuss. In example 18, Ray suddenly switches from attacking and being attacked by one group and laughingly apologizes to another person whom he had shouted at several minutes before hand. Such sudden changes of topic seem to make the interaction of the men have less of a flowing quality to it. Example 19 provides another example. Ben has been conducting a near monologue about various aspects of fishing for around 5 minutes. Finally Dan responds to Ben with a fish-related topic but Ray then cuts through all this with a question about beer.

Example 19

Dan: we used to feed them to the cat but the cat used to choke
all these bones

Ray: have you tried that (...) lager?

Beer is a new topic which has not been mentioned previously. All talk of things fishy then totally ceased. The topic change is sudden and total.

This jerkiness seemed to be characteristic of the male data. There would be long periods of silence followed by spells of speech. The speech itself was often disjointed, due to pausing by the speakers and lack of response by the listeners, and the topic could change with no warning and seemingly for no reason. The tendency that the males had to take issue with one another meant that arguments would suddenly occur and then just as suddenly cease when the participants moved on to the next topic.

The male talk contrasts with the female talk then in a variety of ways. Males do not provide minimal feedbac and often do not respond in any way to other's comments. They disagree very directly and bluntly with other's statements. They abuse each other and criticise each other very directly. And they appear to feel no need to provide topic support or to develop other's topics. They appear to switch topic abruptly and without regard for the previous speaker's topic.

Discussion

The examples have illustrated a variety of ways in which female and male talk differs. The women generally seemed to treat gossip as a cooperative venture. They prompted one another and giave positive feedback. Their turns echoed and linked to previous turns in interesting ways. I found examples of mimicking of accents and repetition of ideas from the previous turn. The women deliberately provided each other with opportunities to join in and take a turn at speaking. When they disagreed with each other they did so indirectly.

The men by contrast spent a lot of their time talking without receiving any feedback, or even without anyone seeming to take any notice of them. When they did interact verbally the interaction was often apparently very negative and unsupportive involving disagreement, criticism and abuse.

The women's talk appears to be observing generally recognized principles of politeness. The women use a high number of the positive politeness strategies identified by Brown and Levinson (1978) as strategies which emphasize group membership and solidarity. The following stategies could all be identified in the recordings of the women's talk:

1. Noticing H (eg commenting on each other's knitting and asking about H's children).
2. Exaggerate (eg the women would give positive feedback even when the topic under discussion was of no particular interest to them; all the group would laugh even though not all of them necessarily agreed that the topic was amusing).
3. Use of in group identity markers (eg the *Days of Our Lives'* audience all referred to the programme as *Days* to one another, and collectively referred to a couple on the programme as 'Ho and Bope').
4. Seek agreement (they selected topics that had often been discussed before and were known to be enjoyable to all; Jen and Sal would scandalize about S's son; Liz and Sal would scandalize about S).
5. Avoid disagreement (eg Jen and S wait until Sal has left the room before discussing Db who is quite friendly with Sal).
6. Assert common ground (eg frequent reference to events that all participants have some knowledge of).
7. Include both S and H in activity (eg comments such as 'we're going well this morning').
8. Joke (eg Pat planning to buy a house with her overdraft; Jen and Sal planning to borrow some priceless antiques from a neighbour since she has so many).
9. Give gifts to H (eg the *Days of Our Lives* audience filling one another in on episodes that they have missed; admiring comments about the speed at which a jersey has been knitted).

The men by contrast not only fail to use these positively polite strategies, they often explicitly contradict them. They tend to emphasise disagreement rather than agreement and this is a feature of men's speech which has been noted in other contexts as well (see, for example, Holmes 1989).

Women then seem to put more effort into cultivating a satisfying interaction along the lines of conventional politeness strategies. The men, by contrast seem to feel no qualms about meeting a challenge with a counter challenge. They are quite willing to let the challenges develop into open hostility, and in fact appear to enjoy

expressing hostility towards one another. They frequently abuse one another. It seems possible then that while women use positive politeness strategies to express solidarity, the men use abuse as a means of signalling solidarity. The men often made comments that indicated that they looked upon this abusive behaviour as a positive thing and polite behaviour as something negative. Jim says to Ray at one point 'Don't try and make out that I'm nice', he then goes on to comment 'I like complete bastards'. Not only does he claim that being nice is something to be ashamed of, but he also claims that being a dishonourable sort of a male is a positive attribute in his eyes. Jim is speaking jokingly when he makes these comments, but they do seem to indicate that the men do not feel that abusive behaviour is necessarily anti-social behaviour. The men appear to identify with such behaviour and see it as appropriate masculine behaviour. The women's groups are a total contrast in this respect. Disagreement is avoided and agreement is built upon.

Why should this be the case? Why should one group use one set of norms while the other uses an opposing set of norms? Within each group there seems to be a strong awareness of their group's respective norms. The women wait to be prompted and expect constant feedback, while the men are happy to talk without feedback and are quite aware that the abuse is not meant to be taken as a genuine threat. The women's behaviour follows the rules for polite interaction described by Brown and Levinson (1978). From this perspective, then, it is the men's behaviour which requires explanation.

An answer can perhaps be found by considering the 'male mateship culture' as described by Bev James and Kay Saville-Smith (1989). Using their description (James and Saville-Smith 1989: 49), the men can be seen as behaving in a way that will impress masculine associates with their own fearlessness in flouting social norms. The men insult one another to demonstrate their own bravery, but if they are insulted in return they risk humiliation. The risk that they are taking in insulting one another is a risk that James and Saville-Smith argue is central to many male leisure time activities.

James and Saville-Smith cite a passage from Mataira (1987) in which Mataira notes that men in a small North Island East Coast rugby club use ritualized violence in the game 'argy-bargy' where group members knock one another to the ground to signal their allegiance to their mateship group. I think that the verbal sparring that goes on between the males in my data is a verbal form of this same

game. By knocking one another down with words the men are signalling their solidarity and their mateship. I would add from my knowledge of this group that the verbal sparring sometimes becomes physical and this seems to be enjoyed by the participants as much as their verbal arguments.

Conclusion

From the data that I have gathered I have argued that men and women in same-sex interaction behave very differently when they gossip. Both these groups however seem to have the same goals for their interaction. Speakers in both wish to demonstrate their membership of the group and the solidarity that they feel with the other members. The women do this by employing well recognized positive politeness strategies. However, the men in my sample, by these standards, appear to be behaving in an anti-social and impolite way. It seems likely they are using different norms.

The men's norms are those of a masculine mateship culture which requires displays of masculine fearlessness and power. These displays commonly manifest themselves in the form of abuse and challenges. The men did not spend all their time openly challenging and abusing one another, but even when their interaction was more peaceful, it was not cooperative in the same way as the women's interaction. The men showed their support for other speakers by failing to prevent them from speaking, rather than by encouraging them to speak.

Members of each group were well aware of their own group's norms, but I am not so sure that they were aware of the norms of the other group. At first when I listened to the male data I found the challenges, abuse and lack of support rather alien. The men that I taped commented to me that they felt that the way women talked behind each other's backs was equally alien to them. We both felt that our own sex group's norms were the more friendly and more acceptable norms. These differing models of supportive interaction then could be one source of miscommunication between the sexes (see Tannen 1990). Men may not actually be ignoring women when they speak, but simply failing to give them the feedback that they expect in a supportive environment. Women may not be 'two faced' when they agree with an interlocuter, only to criticize them when they are no longer present. They are simply maximizing the common ground between them and their interlocuter, while at the same time expressing their own feelings.

The conventional linguistic models of verbal politeness do not account for the competitive and less supportive aspects of male gossip. What is going on on the surface of these interactions seems to be totally at variance with the behaviour that established models describe. These men are not seen by one another as behaving in an unfriendly manner. They are conforming to what they expect of each other. Their behaviour is interpreted as supportive and appropriate. In accounting for the line between acceptable challenges and abuse and true aggression, it seems possible that a new approach will be needed.

In this project I have considered gossip only in single-sex groups. It would be interesting to consider the features of the two group's styles in mixed interactions. Are the norms of one sex used more than the others? Or is an altogether new set of norms established? Michael King comments that he was taught that men were to be more polite when in the company of women than with men (1988: 138). Now that men and women share a wider range of environments, this double standard may no longer be applicable.

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What's the score?
Qualitative analysis in gender research.

Maria Stubbe

Abstract

Most research on gender differences in interactive style is based on quantitative methods of data analysis (eg. whether or not there are differences in the relative numbers of interruptions, minimal responses or agreements/disagreements produced by females and males in different contexts). Although taken as a whole the body of evidence points to a number of clear trends, it is nevertheless true that results of individual studies have often proved conflicting and difficult to interpret. This paper argues that qualitative analysis, by providing insights into the functions of different interactive strategies, adds a valuable perspective to quantitative research both as a basis for developing appropriate classification systems and in the valid interpretation of results. By taking into account the results of both quantitative and qualitative analyses of the same data, it is possible to gain a much clearer picture of the processes at work in an interaction than would otherwise be possible.

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Introduction

The last two decades have seen a substantial amount of research into the relationship between language and gender. In particular, there is considerable evidence that the interactional strategies typical of males and females vary systematically, although neither gender uses one set of strategies exclusively. This evidence comes from a range of academic disciplines, including sociolinguistics, applied linguistics, conversation analysis, communication studies, education and psychology. It shows females to be more process-oriented, providing a positive interactional environment for their conversational partners. They are usually active listeners, who make use of collaborative strategies such as providing supportive feedback and elaborating on other speakers' utterances, in order to facilitate participation by others and to ensure that an interaction proceeds smoothly. Males,

by contrast, tend to focus more on the referential content or the product of an interaction. They show less concern for their fellow speakers, and tend to be more competitive and aggressive. They are more likely to use a range of conversational devices such as frequent interruption, bald assertions and disagreements and delayed feedback in order to dominate the talking time and control the content of an interaction.

These generalisations are based on studies of a variety of features of interaction, in research which has predominantly followed a tradition of quantitative data analysis. Typically, this involves counting the relative frequencies of different forms in the interaction of males and females in various contexts; the interpretation of results therefore relies heavily on which sex 'scores the highest' in producing various forms. In many cases, however, there is a lack of explicit attention to the relationship between form and function in different contexts. There tends to be an assumption that it is possible to attach a single communicative function to a given linguistic form or interactional device. Thus, for example, strategies such as interruption and bald disagreement are counted as being disruptive devices for achieving conversational dominance, while strategies such as minimal feedback and agreement are assumed to be supportive.

Quantitative studies have been extremely valuable as a means of empirically testing a number of stereotypes and hypotheses about male and female styles of interaction; to date, they have provided consistent evidence of the clear trends outlined above, trends which are also borne out by more recent studies making use of a qualitative approach to data analysis. However, the use of quantitative methods alone often fails to adequately capture the complexities inherent in any analysis of interactional data. In addition, as Swann (1988) points out, there is a problem of interpretation when attempting to quantify sex difference data because we are dealing with gender *associations* rather than categorical differences, thus making it problematical to simply aggregate the results of different studies, or even at times to draw firm conclusions from individual studies.

This paper argues that qualitative or functional analysis is an essential adjunct to quantitative methodologies when researching sex differences in interactional style. By providing insights into the *functions* of interactive strategies in various contexts, qualitative analysis both provides a basis for developing appropriate classification systems for quantification, and adds a valuable perspective to the interpretation of results.

Multi-functionality

Although the female and male styles already described have been linked to particular sets of communicative strategies, the assumption that a single set of forms can be related exclusively to a single function has increasingly been questioned (eg Coates 1988, Holmes 1984, Swann 1988). In fact, there is growing empirical evidence to suggest that multi-functionality is, in fact, the norm; the *context*, and the speaker's communicative goals in a particular interaction, determine which meaning or function should be attached to particular conversational features.

This raises a number of methodological issues for researchers working within a quantitative framework; it is obviously much more straightforward to define and classify linguistic features objectively according to their form, than to apply functional criteria which by their nature tend to be more open to a variety of interpretations. However, this very complexity is what makes it essential to do a close, context-based analysis, taking account of both form and function, in order to classify and count conversational features reliably, and to interpret results in a meaningful way. I will discuss four features of interaction by way of illustration: interruption, agreement and disagreement strategies, and minimal responses, with examples drawn from data I collected and analysed as part of a study of gender differences in the interaction strategies of 11 - 12 year old schoolchildren involved in pair discussion tasks (Stubbe 1991).

Interruptions
The context of an utterance affects how we may interpret its function on two levels. Firstly, the overall social context or setting may affect which interactional strategies a speaker will select, and how these are used. The immediate context of an utterance within an interaction must also be taken into account. A failure to recognise that the function of an interactive strategy can vary according to the context in these ways has implications both for the validity of the results of individual studies, and for how the results of different studies may be interpreted and compared. A case in point, which I will discuss in some detail, is that of sex differences in interruption, an aspect of conversational interaction which has been extensively researched in recent years, resulting in a wealth of complex and sometimes contradictory evidence. An important focus of this research has been on showing the relationship between interruptions and male conversational dominance.

Most studies of interruption take as their starting point the assumption that conversations are rule-governed sequences of behaviour, with interactants demonstrating a high degree of skill in effecting smooth turn transitions. Overlaps represent errors in prediction, while interruptions are generally seen as a violation of the basic turn-taking rule or norm, that one person speaks at a time (Sacks et al 1974), and as such, are assumed to be a disruptive or dysfunctional conversational strategy. A majority of studies show that in mixed sex contexts men interrupt women more than vice versa (eg Craig and Pitts 1990, Eakins and Eakins 1979, McMillan et al 1977, Schick Case 1988, West 1979 West and Zimmerman 1983, Woods 1988, Zimmerman and West 1975), and this has generally been interpreted as evidence of male conversational dominance.

This interpretation is not universally accepted: some researchers whose studies have failed to replicate these findings reject the male dominance hypothesis, because they either found no sex differences, or found women doing more of the interrupting (eg Beattie 1983, Dindia 1987, Murray and Covelli 1988). In fact, the male dominance model does provide a convincing explanation for the results of particular studies and some of the patterns which have emerged from this area of research as a whole, but it nevertheless fails to account for the whole range of findings on sex differences in interruption behaviour.

While there are many possible reasons for these apparent inconsistencies, including issues relating to research design, and the effect of variables other than gender, one of the main problems seems to be a lack of explicit attention to the relationship between form and function. There is good evidence to suggest that in some contexts, interruptions, while appearing to disrupt the discourse on a formal level, do not actually function disruptively at all, being used instead as a strategy for demonstrating solidarity and involvement (eg Bennett 1981, Coates 1988, Edelsky 1981, Kalcik 1975, Natale et al 1979, Tannen 1984), or to provide elaboration or support for the propositional content of the addressee's utterance (eg Kennedy and Camden 1983, Dindia 1987). Whether or not interruptions are an indicator of conversational dominance, or are functioning in some other way requires context-specific interpretation.

The potentially negative effect of interruptive forms on a discussion can be easily demonstrated. In the following extract, for example, BN's interruptions serve to cut off AD's statement of his opinion, and later, his justification of that opinion. While there is some elaboration of ideas here, it is likely the discussion would have been

less superficial if AD had been allowed to say everything he wanted to say without BN pressing on with his own opinions. (The transcription conventions are described at the end of the paper.)

(1)

AD: b (2) eight *[reads]* your best friend isn't good at maths ++ um + suggest that oh + that's being ++ that's not + not **a friend at all**

BN: **not a very good** not a very good friend

AD: yeah not a friend at all

BN: not a VERY good friend + cos you're not really helping them that much

AD: oh but you're telling them **not to do it so you're NOT +**

BN: **oh yeah (   ) so it'd BE a** good friend not NOT a very good friend

AD: **yeah** two and what was it? it was d

BN: mm (3)

It is interesting that where this disruptive, turn-competitive type of interruption occurs in my data, it often seems related to a desire on the part of the 'interruptor' to speed up the process of completing a section of the task, rather than to a desire to hold forth on the topic themselves. Example (2) provides a classic example of this type of interruption:

(2)

AD: I reckon that's a BAD one for the kids cos they'd be getting switched round all the time +

KN: yeah + they'd have to keep moving +

AD: yeah so + bad + do you reckon?

KN: yeah (2) they should **they should have- mm** [laughs]

AD: **bad + bad bad + bad bad**

KN: okay + um the family could stay together or- + but
       the parents wouldn't like it + =

AD: **good   good   good   good   good=**

KN: **the parents don't like each other**

AD: **=yeah + bad**
bad + good good good [chuckles]

KN: yeah

As in Example 1, the effect on the discussion is to cut short the interlocutor's attempt to make a point, and to focus on the end result (writing down 'the answer') rather than on the process of reaching a joint solution.

This negative, disruptive function is the one generally ascribed to interruptions in the research literature. However, my data confirms other research showing that interruptions (or interruptive forms) often seem to function as supportive strategies, signalling close involvement in the interaction, and as a strategy for active listening. In some such cases, the interruptive form seems to function much like a backchannel response, (what Edelsky (1981) refers to as a 'non-floor-holding turn'), serving to encourage the mainchannel speaker to continue, or to affirm what they are saying. Another example of how interruptive forms may be used as a collaborative strategy is seen in 'sentence completion', where a second speaker predicts, usually accurately, how the first speaker will finish a point, and 'chips in' before the other speaker has completed their utterance. The 'interruption' is clearly not a disruptive strategy in such cases, but rather, is a sign of how closely the hearer is following the speaker's thought processes. Sometimes this second strategy develops into a longer collaborative sequence (similar to Edelsky's (1981) concept of a 'collaborative floor'), where the speakers seem to be jointly constructing and developing a single train of thought, almost as if they were

speaking with one voice, rather than following a 'one at a time' rule. Extract (3) is a typical example of such a collaborative sequence:

(3)

BN: *[reads]* dad could have the kids during the week + mum could have the kids during the weekends and during the holidays ++ that's-(2)

GB: that would be-|

BN: |good for ALL of them?

GB: *[laughs]* no-o ++ because then the mother well HE'D have them ++ **through the-** yeah ++ the father would have=

BN: **all the time**

GB: =them MOST of **the time**

BN: **so it's BAD** for the mum

GB: yeah + **it's good for dad**

BN: **It's good for dad ++ for KIRSty yeah it's good=**

GB: **It's good for Kirsty**

BN: =for Kirsty ++ good for Martin + oh ++ he liked his mum doesn't he?

GB: yeah

It is difficult to capture the dynamics of sequences like this in a transcript alone. When heard on a tape, they are remarkable for the degree of precision timing displayed by the speakers; at the same time, the tempo usually increases, but the tone is one of enthusiasm rather than urgency, and instead of the speakers

competing for the floor, there is a marked sense of collaborative construction of the dialogue.

These examples show clearly that it is simplistic to relate a strategy such as interruption to a single function in terms of the discourse. It is not possible to predict from its form alone whether an interruption actually functions disruptively on an interactional level, by interfering with the other speaker's turn at talk, and disorganising the ongoing construction of the topic (cf West and Zimmerman 1983), or whether it has a facilitative function. Interruptions are not *inherently* a disruptive or dominance device; their function depends on how they are used, how often, and in what context. Once this point is understood, the apparently inconclusive evidence on whether it is males or females who interrupt the most can be reinterpreted as providing evidence of characteristic gender differences in how interruptions function in various contexts. Adding a qualitative perspective to the process of weighing up the evidence makes it clear that males are in fact more likely than females to use interruption as a disruptive device in order to control and dominate an interaction, while, particularly in same-sex and/or private contexts, females characteristically use it as a facilitative device to jointly construct a dialogue and to demonstrate solidarity and support for other speakers (cf Coates 1988).

Supportive minimal responses, agreement and disagreement strategies

Although a list of forms provided a starting point for the analysis of supportive minimal responses (SMRs), agreement and disagreement strategies in my data, the classification of utterances into these categories was heavily dependent on interpretation of both the local and extended context. In the case of agreements and disagreements, the importance of context in relating form and function becomes greater as the agreement or disagreement becomes less explicit, although even apparently unambiguous tokens like *yes* and *no* require interpretation in context, as they can at times function almost interchangeably (eg Lane 1986). Another problem of definition arose in relation to partial or qualified agreements, often expressed by means of a multi-utterance turn, where the dividing line between agreement and disagreement was not always easily drawn. In these cases, the criterion used was the overall semantic effect of the turn, as interpreted from the immediate context.

A second level of analysis relates to the sub-categorisation of devices within the categories of agreement and disagreement. A speaker's selection of a strategy from a particular point on the continuum from explicit to implicit realisations is bound to have functional implications. There are implications for politeness (threat to face) and conversational supportiveness in choosing an explicit disagreement strategy (eg. direct contradiction) rather than an implicit one which requires more inferencing on the part of the interlocutor (eg. token agreement). In the case of agreements, such choices may reflect the 'strength' or degree of commitment of the agreeing utterance, or the relative involvement of a speaker at a particular point in the interaction.

Even utterances from a closed class of forms, the supportive minimal response (SMR), were not always straightforward to identify in my data. SMRs were defined as a closed class of short, usually monosyllabic utterances (eg *mm, mhm, uhuh, yeah, okay, right*), which function primarily to provide positive interactive feedback, and to maintain or extend the existing speaker's floorholding. They are not heard as interruptions or true speaker contributions, and therefore prompt no reaction from the 'primary speaker' when used appropriately (Bublitz 1988).

Complicating the analysis in these instances, is the fact that a particular linguistic form may be functionally ambiguous; in other words, it may serve several functions at the same time, at different levels of meaning. For example, a particular utterance may carry both referential and social or affective meaning simultaneously (Holmes 1984). This functional ambiguity is often exploited by speakers to subtly manipulate an interaction, and it can make decisions about how to classify particular utterances very difficult.

SMRs are characterised by such a potential functional ambiguity: a basic meaning of agreement and confirmation underlies those forms used as SMRs, and the same forms, though with different distribution and intonation, are at times also used referentially. This potential ambiguity is often exploited by speakers as a sort of escape route to avoid having to commit themselves to a more definite agreement, or to avoid overt disagreement (eg Bublitz 1988).

It is possible to distinguish 'true' SMRs from those cases where a minimal response FORM is used (eg *yeah*) but its primary function is clearly REFERENTIAL. These 'minimal' agreements have a different distribution and typical intonation contour to those defined as true minimal responses. For example:

(4)   S1:   she likes everybody being TOGETHER
       S2:   mm + yeah + *[reads]* Kirsten .....

Unlike SMRs, such utterances either constitute a turn in their own right, or the start of a turn, or function to 'pass back' the floor (ie the first speaker has yielded the turn, expecting some response, but the second speaker does not wish to elaborate a response at that point). Bublitz (1988:187) distinguishes such `speaker contributions' from `hearer signals' (SMRs) by defining their function as reacting to a preceding statement by `stating a position' rather than simply `taking note'. Thus, they are often a response to an explicit request for support or agreement, and/or an explicit agreement or token agreement marker preceding an elaboration. As such, they are not optional responses. When used with epistemic intonation (ie fall-rise) they are heard as expressing doubt, either as a negative response to a question, or reserving judgement. A possible gloss might be 'I'm not ready to agree - convince me.' When the utterance occurs in the contexts described above, and the intonation contour is a short clear fall, it is heard as an agreement.

There are also numerous examples in my data where an SMR, while retaining its primary affective function, can also be clearly heard to signal agreement with the speaker's proposition (this meaning is conveyed by the intonation, probably reinforced by non-verbal signals). Possible glosses here would be: 'I'm listening and I agree', or 'I agree - keep going'. The primacy of the SMR's interactional function and the potential for ambiguity in these cases is illustrated nicely by the following example, where S2 requires explicit confirmation that S1 agrees, although the *mm* clearly sounds like an `agreeing' minimal response:

(5)   S1:   *Martin could live with his mum and the girls could live with their*
                   dad ++ that would be good I s'pose ( )
            S2:   it would be BETTER + for mum ++ WOULDN'T IT?
            S1:   **mm**
            S2:   yeah ++ it WOULD

The significance of these examples for language and gender research is twofold: firstly there are implications for the interpretation of relative SMR 'scores' for males and females, and secondly, there may be systematic gender differences in the use of various functional subcategories. For example, Maltz and Borker (1982) suggest

that there are sex differences in the typical functions and interpretation of minimal responses, with males more often using then as signals of agreement, and females as attention signals.

At yet another level of functional complexity, speakers are able to subtly manipulate SMRs, making use of the supportive surface meaning to achieve quite different functions from the usual one of providing interactional support. Examples where sex differences have been reported include male use of non-supportive strategies such as DELAYED minimal feedback (eg Zimmerman and West 1978), and using minimal responses instead of full responses as a way of avoiding participation in a conversation (Fishman 1983). Bublitz (1988:184) suggests that because they can be inserted almost anywhere in the stream of talk, `hearer signals' are an excellent device for `pretending to listen', which probably partly explains Fishman's (1983) finding that the women in her couples asked so many more questions than the men, as a strategy for eliciting a meaningful response. Bublitz (1988:183,266) also suggests that SMRs can function as a subtle topic control strategy - a sort of interactional `backseat driving', which throws a slightly different light on their role as a facilitative device. As noted above, they can also function as negative politeness strategies such as off-record disagreement or agreement, or as a polite means of `booking' a turn at talk.

Similarly, by the skilful use of agreement or disagreement strategies in conjunction with other pragmatic devices, speakers create meanings in addition to or in place of the immediate semantic effect. For example, there are a number of examples in my data where an agreement on the referential level (categorised as a supportive act), actually functions non-supportively on an interactional level as a topic control device by cutting off the addressee's elaboration of their opinion, and following with a new proposition. This is illustrated by the following extract, where S2's agreement functions simultaneously to concede the point and to take the floor; this interpretation is strengthened by the fact that S1 attempts to `interrupt back' seeking confirmation that the agreement was not just a token one:

(6)   S1:   that's bad because Martin doesn't get on with his
                   father-
            S2:   **oh yeah** well I reckon|
            S1: |DOES he?
            S2:   no + I reckon we should put this one second?
            S1:   yeah

There are also numerous examples of referentially redundant restatements of agreement, particularly where a consensus has finally been reached after a disagreement sequence, which seem to have little to do with conveying referential meaning, and much to do with the affective function of building solidarity, as shown by the following example:

(6)   S1:   ....oh just say change it over every month or something
                S2:   *[laughs]* okay kids or parents change over every month
                S1:   yeah

Clearly, utterances which have been classified and counted as agreements, disagreements or supportive minimal responses may function in a variety of often quite subtle and complex ways within an interaction; some of these have been touched upon briefly in the discussion above. Simply counting the relative frequencies of these devices without looking at how they function will tell us little of any value.

Communicative goals

All the examples discussed so far illustrate the importance of taking account of the function(s) of an interactional feature when defining categories for quantification and classifying data, as well as in the interpretation of results. It can also be useful to turn this consideration of form and function on its head, and examine the range of strategies which may be used by speakers to accomplish a particular communicative goal. For example, a speaker who intends to dominate an interaction, or conversely to facilitate the contributions of others, will use whatever interactional resources are available and appropriate. These resources will vary from context to context, and also according to differences in individual or group norms or styles of interaction. Moreover, as has already been illustrated, the same device may be used for quite different purposes in different contexts. The two examples that follow illustrate these points, by showing the strategies adopted by two same sex pairs of girls and boys, resulting in contrasting process and task orientations in their respective interactions. The first extract, taken from an interaction between two girls, provides a good example of the range of strategies which can be used to provide encouraging feedback, thus facilitating the interaction process:

(7)

    SU: ....++ um I would say ++ um +
              changing the subject because if you- + if you said she looked
              better in the old pair ++   it's it's like=

    BR: **she might**

5   SU: =s- saying tell the truth + but=

    BR: **yeah**

    SU: =if y' you know if you sort of + if you- she might- if you tell the
              truth + (   ) **because** +   **she'd=**

    BR: **(then she might feel) put down**

10   SU: =be you know she might be- she might feel a bit rejected
              but if you DID tell the truth it's because you're =

    BR: **mm**

    SU: =truthful to your friend + and 'n 'n say that so I=

    BR: **yeah**

15   SU: =think it would be + if you said you liked the old pair better it
              would be LIKE + saying your friend looks great (   ) when you
              don't think she does look great in them + so that's- I think you
              could say you liked the old pair better and that'd be a little lie
              cos that's (almost) saying like putting- trying to put her down

20   BR: **ye-ah**

    SU: **um | + tell the tr- tell your friend the truth or change**
              | **the subject=**
    BR: **|but ++ I can't tell the truth**

SU: =I wouldn't tell the truth cos it would hurt her I (think) I'd just
25   change the subject cos I mean you're not **making** a comment
on any of them? ++

BR: **yeah**

In lines 6, 12, 14, 20 and 27, BR gives minimal responses (eg mm, yeah), while in line 11 she produces an interruptive form which functions as a 'backchannel' sentence completion ('then she might feel put down'), foreshadowing SU's subsequent comment neatly. Her first attempt to make this comment (in line 4) is aborted, possibly because she realises that SU had not in fact finished her point. In line 26, her statement 'but I can't tell the truth' (also an interruptive form) acts as a prompt to remind SU of a point she has already made earlier (in line 12). Thus although BR takes on the role of 'secondary speaker' or listener here, as she tends to do throughout this interaction, she is by no means a passive participant in the discussion. On the contrary, her active listening skills help to develop the line of reasoning in a reasonable amount of depth, and she uses a variety of interactive devices to achieve this effect. There is a marked contrast between this extract and the one which follows, which is certainly cooperative in tone, but while some of the strategies used are supportive on a surface level, there is little evidence that they have a facilitative effect in terms of developing the discussion.

(8)

GR: you think your friend is taking drugs do you + tell your friend + all you know about the dangers of drugs tell his her present-parents

ST: (parents yeah)

5   GR: tell the school nurse + or your class teacher + um have nothing more to do with it|

ST: |so d would be
one

GR: **mhm** + yeah
10   yeah it'd be one + (tell) that'd be number two wouldn'it?

ST: what? tell her tea-CHER mm ++

GR: oh no that would be number THREE ++ cos tell your **friend all you know** about would be number=

ST: **yeah I know** I know

15   GR: =two ++ and number four would be tell + his her parents which is third (2) and that's number two ++ (   ) um let him her copy your answers that's number one ++ most certainly + number two do the questions together that's number four + um tell her to do homework alone + would that be number two? no that'd be number- yeah that'd be number two + mm suggest that she he ask the teacher for extra work would be number ( ) + yeah

ST: ( )

GR: what do we do now?

25   ST: the next one

The two boys involved in this discussion seem preoccupied with working through the various components of the task at hand as quickly as possible; their focus is not on the process of reaching a shared conclusion, but rather on finding 'the answer', and moving on to the next task as quickly as possible. This is reflected in the interactional strategies used by both participants; the discussion consists entirely of unsupported opinions about the relative rankings of the alternatives, interspersed with simple agreements or procedural questions (eg lines 5-7). The participants show little or no interest in why their partner holds a particular opinion or in negotiating the answer.

Conclusion

The problems outlined here in devising satisfactory definitions and categories for the quantitative analysis of interactional data, and the descriptive analysis of the various interactive strategies discussed, both highlight the fact that the same

linguistic forms can be used as strategies to produce very different interactive outcomes. Thus, in different situations, an interruptive form may be disruptive or supportive of the other speaker's utterance, an agreement or minimal response may serve both to encourage the elaboration of a point or to cut it short, and dominance of the talking time may reflect control of a conversation or a greater preparedness to do the interactional work. The strategies selected and how they function will reflect the communicative goals of the speaker and the interactional resources available in a particular context: there is no invariant relationship between form and function.

This has important implications for research into sex and language. For example, the conclusions drawn from studies focusing on quantitative sex differences will be rather simplistic if a particular interactive feature, such as interruptions for instance, is related in an unsophisticated way to a single function like conversational dominance, without adequate consideration of contextual factors. This helps to explain why much of the existing evidence on sex differences in language use seems contradictory at one level of detail, even though the overall trends are quite clear. Quantitative results can be interpreted far more satisfactorily when put into the overall context of a descriptive analysis. Although this may seem a very obvious point, it is one which has often not been adequately recognised and dealt with in the past.

In conclusion, qualitative analysis provides useful insights into how various interactive strategies function and work together in context, and how they relate to the variable of gender. It is important to take account of both the different ways in which a particular form can function in different contexts, and also the range of strategies speakers may use to realise particular interactional goals. Using a qualitative approach in conjunction with quantitative methods allows the researcher to classify data in a more meaningful way, and considerably enriches the interpretation of results, making it possible to gain a much clearer picture of the processes at work in a set of interactions, than would otherwise be the case.

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KEY TO TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS

The following symbols have been used in the data extracts reproduced in this article. With the exception of the method adopted for showing simultaneous and contiguous utterances, which I devised myself, they are based largely on the transcription conventions developed at Victoria University for the Wellington Corpus of Spoken English (ACCENZ).

General principles:

Speakers are labelled using two uppercase letters from an assigned name.

No punctuation or capital letters have been used, except for proper names and *I,* and apostrophes.

Where it is clear from the tape that the children are reading aloud, this is indicated in the transcription by *[reads]*

Transcription in doubt:

( )	Speech indecipherable
(sure)	Transcriber's best guess at unclear utterance. Length of parentheses indicates utterance length.

Intonation:

?	Signals rising or question intonation
-	Hyphen indicates incomplete or cut-off utterance

Stress:

GOOD	Capitals to indicate emphatic stress

Noises:

mm	Minimal feedback
mhm	yes
[voc]	Non-speech vocalisations eg clicks, nonsense syllables

Paralinguistic and relevant non-verbal features:

[*loudly*]
[*groan*]
[*laughs*]   Description of paralinguistic feature

[*ye-es*]   Hyphen in middle of word indicates drawn-out syllables

[*nods*]   Description of relevant non-verbal features

[*writes*]   Description of relevant action accompanying pause or utterance

Pauses:

+   Short pause (up to half a second)

++   One second pause

(4)   Longer pause: length indicated by noting number of seconds in brackets

Simultaneous speech and contiguous utterances:

Tabulation and bold typeface indicates starting point and boundaries of simultaneous or overlapping speech

```
S1:    + it's got G G G + and then g and a B   ++    and a B
S2:                          yeah I know I know it's what I said
```

Interlineal format: = indicates the same utterance continues on to the next line allocated to that speaker.

```
S1:    mm no + we can't + no ++ no u-m + finally decide on=
S2:              mm
S1:    =the one + best + solution
```

| plus tabulation indicates 'latching', where the second utterance immediately follows the first.

```
S1     yeah cos she likes everybody except for when they |
S2                                              |argue
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. . . .

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