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Title
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Permalink
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Journal
Issues in Applied Linguistics, 9(2)

ISSN
1050-4273

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Publication Date
1998-12-30

DOI
10.5070/L492005276

Peer reviewed

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Triadic Participation in Organizational Meeting Interaction

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Attention to multi-party talk has revealed that shifts in participation frameworks can be used to serve social functions in interaction. This paper gives a sequential analysis of a videotaped interaction from an organizational meeting, where participants use a particular interactional exchange to display and even create the personal relationships that exist between them. This is done by using a particular participation framework in what I call a triadic exchange in accomplishing particular social acts that are potentially face-threatening. I argue that this display contributes to how in-group membership is developed in these organizations. The use of triadic exchanges makes public the display of the participants' relationships to each other, making participation more accessible to a general audience and building in-group memberships that can develop over time through interaction.

Interest in multi-party interaction has shifted the focus of interactional studies from the canonical dyadic interaction to the diverse possibilities introduced by more than two participants in an interaction (e.g., Goodwin, 1981; Duranti, 1986; Lerner, 1993; Schegloff, 1995). Attention to multi-party talk has highlighted the complex nature of multiple audiences and the fact that it is quite possible that no individual addressees can be delineated at any one time. The diversity of audiences available provides a setting in which interactional strategies can be used toward social goals. The meeting context, for example, provides a site in which interactional strategies can be used for building in-group membership.

In organizations in which the personal rapport between participants influences the strength of the organization, the interactional possibilities of face to face interactions provided by the meeting context can serve to strengthen (or weaken) the ties within the organization. Even within the somewhat constrained context of an organizational meeting, participants still have access to the personal relationships they share with one another. The displaying of these relationships allows the participants to gauge, share in, or display inclusion in the group, both as an organizational body on one level, and as a social group on another. In these face to face encounters, participants share what Goffman calls a similar "access to the encounter"([1979] 1981, p. 132).

In the social service organization discussed in this paper, the personal relationships between the participants are highlighted in the context of the meetings to establish and display in-group membership. Participants use interactional strategies involving shifting participation frameworks to accomplish this, especially when it involves potentially face-threatening acts (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Brown and Levinson (1987) define face-threatening acts as "those acts that by their nature run contrary to the face wants of the addressee and/or of the speaker" (p. 65).

Issues in Applied Linguistics ISSN 1050-4273
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Vol. 9 No. 2, 139-150

Warnings are included among the acts that threaten a hearer's negative-face wants. However, the example discussed here resembles more those acts that show that the speaker has a negative evaluation of the hearer's positive-face wants (e.g., expressions of disapproval, criticism, complaints, insults). These expressions of disapproval, I argue, are accomplished through the use of a triadic participation framework.

TRIADIC PARTICIPATION FRAMEWORKS

Philips (1972) defines participant framework as "possible variations in structural arrangements of interaction..or ways of arranging verbal interaction" (p. 377). These arrangements represent ways in which teachers and students interact, teach, and learn in the classroom setting. Although the nature of organizational meetings differs from the classroom setting, these differences (and similarities) can be discussed in terms of the participation frameworks that are available in interaction.

Philips' definition, however, has been criticized as a highly structural definition of participation. I define participation framework as a conceptual notion that emerges in interaction where participants display a shared knowledge of their relationships to one another (i.e., in terms of who is being addressed by whom, who is engaged in conversation, who is expected to respond, etc.).

In what I have named *triadic exchange* (Kang, to appear), a Speaker initiates a particular participation framework by addressing more than one type of addressee at once: a Speaker addresses a Mediating Addressee' (or *Mediator*) to communicate a message to another co-present addressee(s), or *Target*. The exchange is not defined as a linear event, but rather, as a framework of participation in which the participants themselves acknowledge a particular configuration of relationships between themselves through which interaction takes place. A diagram of the triadic exchange is given in Figure 1.

Speaker - - - - - > Mediator ———> Target

Figure 1: Diagram of a triadic exchange

Although a speaker succeeds in conveying a message indirectly through the mediating presence of a third party, the message itself is not the essential element. Instead, a particular participation framework may be used to accomplish a certain action. With the ability to call upon a non-addressed participant, a speaker can draw attention to the participation framework s/he has evoked by virtue of the utterance s/he has just uttered. I propose that triadic exchanges take on social functions in the meeting context, where participants are part of an organization and must meet to discuss and make decisions about particular issues. In particular, I show that participation frameworks can be manipulated by participants to accomplish potentially face-threatening acts.

Situations in which a co-present participant is the target of talk have been

pointed out by anthropologists as well as linguists. This particular type of interactional exchange, in which two parties are addressed at once, is discussed by Clark and Carlson (1982), who call this a "lateral indirect illocutionary act." Haviland (1986) discusses situations where teasing takes place in Zinacantán. Irvine (1996) describes ritual insults by members of a Wolof village, where the tradition is for the new bride and her family to be the target of insults by the women of the groom's household. In another part of the world, Basso (1984) discusses how the Western Apache "shoot" each other with stories in order to teach a morality lesson to a particular addressee within the larger group of listeners. These studies suggest that the acts of teasing and insulting, especially in a ritual sense, are often pointed to as social acts that are performed through triadic participation frameworks. I argue that the potentially face-threatening nature of these acts is embedded in the type of participation framework that is used to accomplish them.

In the segment to be analyzed below, more teasing is done using this participation framework. This segment exemplifies one type of triadic exchange in which a target is referred to in the third person, or "talked about," in his presence. In Kang (to appear), I outline various ways in which triadic exchanges may be identified. These include use of third person pronominals, evocation of shared background information, sequential ratification on the part of the target, and non-verbal cues. In the present analysis, I give a sequential analysis of one type of triadic exchange in which the target becomes the "topic" of the interaction when the speaker refers to him in the third person. I show how the action of teasing is accomplished using the interactional resources available in face to face interaction, making a link between a type of activity (teasing), the practice through which it is realized, and the social outcome of the interaction, or how the personal relationships between participants are affected.

DATA AND ETHNOGRAPHIC BACKGROUNDS

The segment from "Summer Camp" is taken from a meeting of Korean American camp counselors who are preparing for a summer youth camp (which I will call Camp Reyes). The counselors are college students who volunteer their time to work at this one-week camp in August. They meet regularly during the summer to prepare for the camp. The segment analyzed here is from a meeting early in the summer. Some are friends from previous years or from other contexts (e.g., school or church), and some had met for the first time that summer. In the summer camp, there are degrees of friendship shared by the members; some are couples, and some are virtual strangers. This segment shows how close friends and new friends can make use of participation frameworks to both reflect and index these relationships.

In a sense, the organization studied here is not typical of an institutional setting, where the instititutional roles can be completely distinct from the personal relationships. They tend to intersect for these participants, and the atmosphere

during these meetings is often of an informal nature. It then follows that the interactions that take place during the meetings may be characteristic not only of meeting interaction, but of the building of various kinds of personal relationships.

The data were collected and transcribed by the researcher (myself) using the transcription conventions for broad transcription of Du Bois et al. (1993). The Summer Camp segment is part of a database collected for a larger project on participation frameworks in bilingual interaction (Kang, in progress). Refer to the appendix for a key to the transcription conventions.

WAYS OF TEASING

In this segment, Mark and Hank have been arguing about who had made the music tapes for a camp the previous year. Mark is the present director of the camp, and Hank is a counselor/assistant director of the camp and Mark's friend. Hank and Mark know each other well, due to previous years of working together. The setting of the interaction is the room where a meeting is soon to take place, and the excerpt below is taken from the conversation that takes place before the meeting starts. In the room are also Jill, who is Hank's girlfriend, several others who are also camp counselors (Andy and Ralph), and myself (Agnes). Figure 2 shows the arrangement of participants in this segment.

In this argument, Mark claims that he and Hank made the music tapes the previous year in the very room they are speaking in. Hank believes he made the tapes himself and tries to convince Mark that the only thing they did together in the meeting room is select songs for a slide show.



Figure 2: Configuration of participants in "Summer Camp"

The beginning of the segment starts off as a prototypical conversational exchange between Hank and Mark. Both are mutually engaged in this conversation, which soon turns into a disagreement. Throughout the conversation, until line 35, each participant's gaze is focused on the other, and they are the only ones engaged in the exchange. A background conversation, not represented here, occurs between Jill and Dave beginning at line 7 and ending at line 29. The others in the room appear disinterested in all interactions.

MARK: I made the last two with you you fool.
((gaze at Hank))
HANK: Not last year's.
MARK: Yeah.
We did it right here. ((points to the other side of the room))
HANK: Last year's?
MARK: Yeah.
HANK: We came up with the music.
((Jill and Dave start conversing in the background))
MARK: We selected [all those last year].
HANK: [No,
That was yours]— ((pointing at Mark))
for your s- —
for your stupid—
that slide show that took like an hour.
MARK: What are you [talking about].
HANK: [at the banquet].
Remember?
MARK: No=,
I did that on my own.
HANK: No.
I remember,
the Camp ~Reyes music tape,
I made it at my house,
that morning before camp.
MARK: Really?
What did we do here?
[What did we do]—
HANK: [ninety-three]. ((1993))
MARK: What did we do here?
((Jill and Dave stop conversing and turn their
attention to this conversation))
HANK: For your slide show.
We were picking out songs.
MARK: Oh.
HANK: ((pointing at Mark)) Don't work with him on anything
like tapes or something <@ because like @>,
((gaze at Dave, Ralph and Jill))
you'll give a suggestion and he'll be like,
yeah but,
and then he'll put his own suggestion down. ((gaze goes
to Mark by the end of utterance, then back to others))
ALL: @@@@
JILL: Oh. ((sympathetically))
MARK: Come on.
HANK: ((pointing at Mark)) He's the most anal person I've
ever met in my life.

46	DAVE:	@@@@[@]
47	JILL:	[This is the] most anal person I've ever met
48		in my life,
49		dude. ((pointing to Hank))
50		((pointing between Hank and Mark))
		[It goes] down the list.
51	MARK:	[Camp ~Reyes]—
52		Camp ~Reyes tapes have been pretty good.

Triadic exchanges begin in lines 35, 44, and 47. What is important to note at each of these points is who the utterance is addressed to. Initially, Hank and Mark are engaged in a dialogue, with some co-present hearers listening in. Their body orientations and gaze are toward each other, suggesting that their utterances are meant solely for the other. In line 35, Hank directs his gaze and body orientation toward the other counselors while pointing at Mark, which is a completely different body orientation. Plate 1 shows Hank's body orientation with respect to the other participants. Hank is pointing to Mark, who is off camera.

Up until this point, he had been engaged in conversation with Mark, negotiating who had made a certain camp tape the previous year. The content of Hank's utterance consists of a warning in the form of "Don't do X because of Y." This kind of act, that of criticizing Mark, would not logically be addressed to Mark

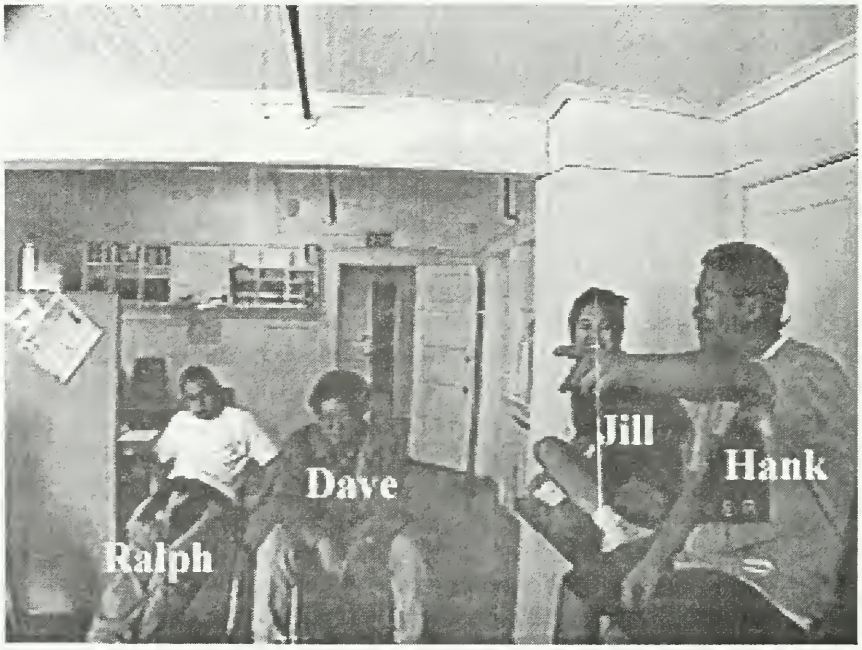


Plate 1: Body orientation of Speaker (Hank) in a triadic exchange.

directly using a third person pronoun ("Don't work with him..."). The use of the third person pronoun excludes Mark from being the traditional addressee, that is, "the one to whom the speaker addresses his visual attention and to whom, incidentally, he expects to turn over the speaking role" (Goffman, [1979] 1981, pp. 132-133). Mark becomes the "topic" of the conversation as well as the warning. The result of doing this in his presence, however, is that of teasing him and publicly criticizing him for his actions. While the propositional content of Hank's utterance in lines 35-39 is that of a warning, the action that results would be more accurately designated as a face-threatening act of teasing. The combination of gesture and gaze used in line 35 can be contrasted with line 11, where Hank directly addresses and refers to Mark while also pointing to him.

THE ROLE OF MEDIATORS IN A TRIADIC EXCHANGE

If Hank is not being addressed in the traditional sense, the next question would then be who is being addressed. From his lack of eye gaze, Ralph continues to be rather disinterested in the conversation, and Hank can only manage to gain the gaze of Dave, who acts as one addressee for Hank's utterance at lines 35-39. His words are said to Dave and (by virtue of being co-present) the other counselors. The laughter in lines 41 and 46 shows the response of the mediators in the triadic exchanges. But it is clear that the message he sends is intended for Mark (the target). Mark is obviously aware that he has been the subject of a public warning and responds to this in line 43 ("Come on"). That an utterance which is directed to one party can cause an effect on and elicit a response from another party is part of the triadic nature of this exchange.

In terms of non-verbal cues, Goodwin (1981) has emphasized the importance of mutual gaze for any collaborative activity to be successful, and that "the gaze of a speaker toward another party can constitute a signal that the speaker's utterance is being addressed to that party" (p. 30). Gaze itself is used as a recognizable action that orients participants to one another. Gaze and body orientation are the main criteria by which the addressees in this segment have been identified, along with the use of third person reference. The use of gaze in triadic exchanges is detailed further in Kang (to appear), which includes the identification of a common gaze pattern in triadic exchanges. In the present analysis, I focus on how this specific interactional exchange is used for face-threatening acts and its effects on the personal relationships of the participants.

In this segment, Hank lodges his complaint against Mark through the mediating presence of the other counselors in the room. Hank is able to access participants and their potential as hearers as a resource in conveying his dissatisfaction with Mark's past actions. Similarly, in line 44, Hank addresses the counselors while pointing again at his targeted audience, Mark. In lines 44-45, Hank makes a characterization about Mark, referring to him in the third person, that again results in a public criticism/teasing of Mark. This utterance also cannot logically be addressed

to Mark, but Hank clearly realizes that Mark will also hear his utterance. He points to Mark, using him almost as a prop, while at the same time defaming him. He succeeds in teasing Mark by using a triadic participation structure that involves not just himself and Mark, but also a third party (the other counselors). This strategy highlights how important the participation framework is in the structure of interaction, especially when it can be used as a vehicle to accomplish a social action.

The act of addressing someone indirectly when the direct option is available along with the act of teasing sets up various expectations about the subsequent interactions. First, the "person complained about" would understandably have a desire to respond to the complaint, whether it is to argue against it or perhaps even to accept and agree with it. The "person complained to" would also have cause to respond to the speaker lodging the complaint. If lines 44-45 had been addressed directly to Mark, the speaker would make a response from Mark (i.e., a rebuttal, complaint or other redressive action) relevant. By expressing the negative characterization indirectly, Hank makes alignment on the part of the bystanders relevant next. In this case, the responses from the participants vary somewhat: Dave aligns with it by laughing; Jill rebuts it by her sympathetic "oh" in line 42.

The potentially face-threatening act opens up expectations for responses from both the target and the mediator(s) and makes the alignment or non-alignment of the co-participants a shared expectation in the interaction. This practice may also be a way of avoiding having the target of the complaint respond immediately. The expectation of more than one response may also diffuse the effects of the warning/teasing. The nature of the responses by the participants who may have different relationships to one another makes for an interesting site for analysis as well. This dual expectation in terms of response places these three parties in a unique relationship that comprises a triadic participation framework. The participants act and respond to one another in such a way that demonstrates a shared understanding of an engaged interaction.

TRIADIC PARTICIPATION AS SOCIAL ACTION

These moments draw attention to the changing participation framework and display how messages can be mediated by different participants in interaction; in essence, the way of conveying the message becomes part of the message itself.

The relationship between the friends in the segment also allows for an atmosphere of joking and teasing as well as a common understanding of the implications of certain events, such as possible past interactions where Mark has exhibited similar behavior. This interaction evokes a particular participation framework that allows the friends to share in the activity of laughing at Hank's public criticism of Mark, even when all the participants may not (and, in fact, do not) share the same level of familiarity with the shared background between Mark and Hank.

The relationships participants have to one another and their actions influ-

ence participation in that certain relationships may give participants a greater "entitlement" to laughter at another's expense. It is noteworthy here which individuals laugh the most and visibly show signs of active participation in reacting to the exchanges in the segment. Jill's sympathetic "oh" in line 42 indexes, in a sense, her close relationship to Hank, who is her boyfriend. She is also the initiator of another triadic exchange in lines 47-48, this time with Hank as the target of the teasing. Thus a kind of "snowball effect" occurs as participants adopt the triadic exchange to shift the participation framework. The tendency for participation frameworks to replicate may show some evidence of sensitivity to frameworks on the part of participants. Jill's gaze and body orientation in the segment indicate that more than one addressee is being addressed. Although these incidents of teasing are done in the spirit of good fun, Jill may also be succeeding in diffusing any possible tension between Hank and Mark, who have been disagreeing in this conversation. Here she may be able to use her status as Hank's girlfriend to deflect Hank's face-threatening act against Mark. Further research into the gender roles associated with certain social acts and frameworks of participation may also be another interesting avenue for future research.

The dynamics of the group can influence when and how triadic exchanges occur. The timely end to the background conversation presents the opportunity for Hank to draw the others in the room into his conversation with Mark. Since the conversation between Jill and Dave has ended by line 30, they can turn their full attention and gaze to the conversation going on between Mark and Hank. Hank can then take advantage of Jill's and Dave's undivided attention to help him criticize Mark in a public arena. Dave, in particular, appears eager to fulfill this role of audience for Hank's insults, as evident in his laughter in both lines 41 and 46. He is visibly enjoying this public activity of insulting Mark even though he is a rather new counselor who has only met the others in the past few weeks. It is here that some ethnographic information becomes relevant. Hank, Mark, and Jill know each other more intimately, which makes the insulting/joking possible. However, the public display of this relationship allows others, like Dave, to join in and participate, even without taking a turn at talk. Because the shifting participation framework is publicly displayed and accessible to the group as a whole, participants who would not otherwise be involved in insulting Mark can be included and actively participate. Although Dave is not actively involved in teasing Mark, or manipulating the participation framework directly, the shared understanding of a triadic participation framework leaves room for him to be included as a mediator, which at least gives Dave a foothold in involving himself in the interaction between Hank and Mark. This de facto way of participating in interactions may be a way for Dave to establish a deeper personal relationship with the other counselors and presents a way of becoming part of the in-group of camp counselors/friends.

On another level, the interaction calls upon personal relationships and makes these somehow relevant to the "business" context of organization. Each interaction carries with it the potential for building a stronger and deeper relationship

among its participants by revealing the relationships they share with one another. In-group membership is formed, in part, by the shared access to personal relationships that the meeting context provides. As an organization, these opportunities for face to face interaction contribute to the collective memory of the participants. The engaging in or even merely the witnessing of such interactions then becomes part of the identity of the group and the members that comprise it.

The discussion of ways in which triadic exchanges can accomplish social actions has indicated the complex nature of how verbal and non-verbal aspects of interaction work together in conversation. Dave, by his participation in the triadic exchanges, makes himself part of a participation framework that is linked to personal interaction without even a turn at talk. Being part of the interaction symbolizes his status as a member of the group on a social level, and suggests that this interaction may have brought Dave closer to achieving in-group membership. His small part in the above interactions also links him to the face-threatening acts of the others, which has allowed him access in some way to the others' personalities and private pasts. In this way, the activity of teasing Hank has also, albeit inadvertently, contributed to giving Dave a place among this social group.

CONCLUSIONS

This discussion has shown that certain participation frameworks can be associated with specific social functions, in particular, that recurrent participation frameworks can be called upon for displaying or even creating personal relationships. The analysis of individual interactions may seem trivial and of little consequence, but the personal interactions that are embedded within larger speech events, like the organizational meeting, constitute the fabric of social life. The identity of groups emerges from the individual social ties that are built within and in the presence of members of one's social network. Participation frameworks become a vehicle through which this performance of social relationships is realized in interaction.

One way in which social relationships are established and developed is through specific social acts performed in interaction. This analysis has looked at one particular social act, that of teasing, to show how it is accomplished through a collectively recognized participation framework. In this way, the activity of teasing, at a local level, is associated with a larger pattern of interaction, or practice, through which it is realized. This practice, as discussed above, is indexed and responded to in subsequent interaction and informs how participants in triadic exchanges are able to recognize each others' and their own roles in the interactions as well as the social outcomes achieved by them.

Furthermore, this interactional device can be used to bid for intimacy, as in the case of the novice camp counselor who participates in this interaction as a way of fitting in and belonging to the group. Organizations consist of individuals, and their interactions build relationships and understandings, not vice versa. What in-

teractional studies can reveal is the process by which in-group membership is formed and developed, giving us a picture, in apparent time, of the social processes that are constantly taking place. Participants can evoke particular participation frameworks, recognize them as such, and acknowledge their presence within the course of subsequent talk.

This analysis has examined the particular activity of teasing, which has often been cited as involving a special participation framework in many cultures. This action can involve many forms of propositional content, from complaining and warning, to insulting, often in a ritual or a joking sense. I propose that what these types of teasing have in common is a common participation framework through which they may be accomplished, and may be recognizable as teasing by the participants themselves. This established link between interaction, practice, and social relationships invites us to consider what other interactional exchanges may be embedded within participation frameworks and how further research in shifting participation frameworks may shed light on the social relationships established through interaction.

APPENDIX

Transcription conventions from Du Bois et al. (1993):

Units	
Intonation unit	{carriage return}
Truncated intonation unit	——
Truncated word	-
Speakers	
Speaker identity/turn start	:
Speech overlap	[ ]
Co-indexed speech overlap	[# #]
Lengthening and Pauses	
Lengthening	=
Pause (long)	...(N)
Pause (medium)	...
Pause (short)	..
Vocal Noises	
Vocal noises	( )
Inhalation	(H)
Exhalation	(Hx)
Glottal stop	%
Laughter	@
Quality	
Quality	<Y Y>
Laugh quality	<@ @>
Quotation quality	<Q Q>

Transcriber's Perspective	
Researcher's comment	(( ))
Uncertain hearing	<X X>
Indecipherable syllable	X
Pseudonym	~

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