

**THE CONFLUENCE BETWEEN: AN OVERVIEW OF
INTERACTIONAL SOCIOLINGUISTIC APPROACH TO
DISCOURSE ANALYSIS**

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Abstract

Human existence rests upon social interactions which exhibit the core values of every individual community as well as the norms of talk in the sustenance of effective communication and maintenance of interaction order. This means the social and cultural contexts guide the use and interpretation of language. This study attempts to x-ray the significance of Interactional Sociolinguistics (IS) to the study of human interactions with regards to how interlocutors work together to develop and negotiate meaning in interaction. Although IS is one of the approaches to discourse analysis, scholars are more inclined to other approaches (i.e. Conversational Analysis (CA) and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)) of investigating human interactions in Nigeria. Thus, the study examines the basic concepts of Interactional Sociolinguistics and portrays how these are operationalised in sample interactions in order to achieve successful and effective communication. Despite the fact that discourse analysts have not adequately paid attention to this particular approach in the Nigeria discourse studies, the study reveals that many scholars have done rigorous work in this area in other climes. Their studies show how interlocutors negotiate meaning through other socio-cultural knowledge apart from linguistic elements to avoid and remedy instances of miscommunication in human interactions/discourse through strategies such as contextualization cues and contextual presuppositions. This study therefore, reveals that IS is an approach to discourse analysis that sees talk/interaction as a social and cultural activity; hence the need for its inclusion in analyzing talks and interactions in the Nigerian discourse studies.

1. Introduction

Social interaction is fundamental to human existence. It cuts across our everyday endeavor and without it humans can do little or nothing. Human beings interact for different obvious reasons, whether to greet, pass information across, argue and associate, etc. Hence, as Gumperz (2001) posits, 'to interact is to engage in an ongoing process of negotiation, both to infer what others intend to convey and to monitor how one's own

contributions are received.’ Social interaction goes beyond looking at the linguistic cues used in communication. It involves both the shared and non-shared interpretations rather than the denotational meaning. This is one of the concerns of discourse analysis. According to Holmes (2008) discourse analysis provides tools to identify the norms of talk among different social and cultural groups in different conversational and institutional contexts; and to describe the discursive resources people use in constructing different social identities in interaction. One of the approaches to discourse analysis that effectively attends to these issues is Interactional sociolinguistics.

Interactional sociolinguistics (henceforth, IS) refers to an integrated approach to discourse and language use in interaction. Its main thrust borders on how speakers signal and interpret meaning in social interaction. It is a perspective to discourse analysis that sees discourse or talk-in-interaction as a social practice as against individual practice. IS is basically an interdisciplinary methodological and theoretical approach rooted in the work of the anthropologist, John Gumperz (1982a, 1982b), who synthesised insights and tools from anthropology, linguistics, pragmatics and conversation analysis into an analytical framework for analysing talk-in-interaction. Gumperz (2001: 215) notes that IS is an approach to discourse analysis that has its origin in the search for replicable methods of qualitative analysis that account for our ability to interpret what participants intend to convey in everyday communicative practice. Reiterating this position, Jaspers (2012: 135) submits that IS studies the language of people in face-to-face interaction. According to him, IS started from the finding that when people talk, they are not able to express everything they mean explicitly enough with linguistic elements. Hence, speakers cannot completely rely on words produced during interaction for them to have a full grasp of what is communicated; they must also depend on background knowledge to discover other relevant contexts that informed the ongoing interaction. In other words, when we consider talk as it occurs in speech events, we must consider other communicative practices involved. Gumperz (*ibid*) asserts that, “to engage in verbal communication is not just to express one’s thoughts. Speaking ties into a communicative ecology that significantly affects the course of an interaction.” Therefore, to Gumperz, the focal point of the investigation falls upon the examination of how we contextualize communication in situated discursive practices seen as interactive and social, with the cooperation of more than one participant.

In real life conversations, interactants are not expected to depend solely on linguistic elements to negotiate meaning of what is said, they are also required to infer from other socio-cultural knowledge they all share in

order to avoid miscommunication. Acknowledging this, Jaspers (2012) posits that, people expect each other to treat talk as incomplete and fill in what is left unsaid; but that people trust each other to provide a suitable interpretation of their words, that is, they expect one another to be aware of the social world that extends beyond the actual setting and of the norms for the use of words that apply there. (p. 135)

One of the positions of IS, as an analytical framework for talk-in-interaction is the incompleteness of talk. It holds that all language users must rely on extra-communicative knowledge to make inferences or hypotheses about how what is said relates to the situation at hand and what a speaker possibly intends to convey by saying it. Stubbe et al. cited by Awang, Maros and Ibrahim (2010: 1081), state that IS takes a micro-analytic approach within a wider sociocultural context and allows us to take explicit account of the unstated assumptions and background knowledge the participants bring to bear as part of the interpretive process. Thus, IS attempts to describe how meaningful contexts are implied via talk, how are these picked up by relevant others and how the production and reception of talk influences subsequent interaction (Jaspers, 2012).

Although credit is always given to Gumperz as the proponent of IS due to the extensive research he has carried out in this area, the literature also shows that Goffman's work from a sociological perspective contributed a great deal to the development of IS. Schiffrin (1994) in her approaches to discourse, posits that IS was inspired by two different schools of thought – anthropology and sociology – and an analyst may be influenced by either depending on the research focus. According to her, those who opt for Gumperz's school of thought focus on "how people from different cultures may share grammatical knowledge of a language but differently contextualize what is said such that very different messages are produced". However, those working within the confines of Goffman's school of thought, "focus on how language is situated in particular circumstances of social life, and on how it adds (or reflects) different types of meaning (e.g. expressive, instrumental) and structure (e.g. interactional, institutional) to those circumstances.

Providing a sociological framework for the study of IS, Goffman, argues that all interactive activities are socially organised at multiple levels. He is of the view that, "all utterances are situated within contexts such as "occasions", "situations", or "encounters" that not only provide structure and meaning to what is said but may themselves be organised by what is said," (Schiffrin,1994). The key concepts in Goffman's perspective to IS are self, face, participation framework, frame and footing; and they strongly impacted

upon Gumperz's work. For instance, Gumperz built upon Goffman's notion of frames which reveal that within any given stream of interaction there is not just one activity or context at play, but rather speakers shift among frames for acting and interpreting action which usually leads to the creation of sub-contexts within the larger context, (Bailey, 2008). Conversely, Goffman's focus on social interaction complements Gumperz's focus on situated inference. As summarized by Schiffrin (1994), Goffman describes the form and meaning of the social and interpersonal contexts that provide presuppositions for the decoding of meaning. The understanding of those contexts, however, can provide the means to fully identify the contextual presuppositions that figure in hearer's inferences of speaker's meaning. Thus, in this paper, we will focus on Gumperz's line of thought on IS.

2. The Central Theme of IS

The central concern of IS is that language, culture and society are 'situated.' This means, language culture and society are grounded in interaction; they stand in a reflexive relationship with the self and the other, and the self-other relationship, and it is out of these mutually constitutive relationships that discourse is created (Gerogieva, 2014). IS aims at the situated interpretation of communicative intent. Describing and explaining meaningful communication in face-to-face interaction depends not only on what is said but drawing upon contextual knowledge of who utters what, when and where (Jaspers, 2012). Context plays a significant role in Gumperz's approach to IS. Gordon (2011) asserts that IS, like the ethnography of communication, emphasizes linguistic and cultural diversity which serve as the core of Gumperz's research. It illustrates a way in which social background knowledge is implicated in the signaling and interpreting of meaning (Bailey, 2008). This is evident in Gumperz's (1982a, 1992b, 2001) works which show how people use linguistic and paralinguistic features referred to as "contextualisation cues" to signal how they mean what they say with emphasis on the fact that the uses of these cues differ culturally. Gumperz views language as a socially and culturally constructed symbol system that both reflects and creates *macro-level social meaning* and *micro-level interpersonal meanings*. Speakers use language to provide continual indices of who they are, and what they want to communicate.

His emphasis on the interpretive importance of contexts includes the occasion in which an utterance is produced in negotiating intelligible meanings in interaction. And if one fails to observe this, it may lead to miscommunication. Consider the live conversation between Rummy (an Iranian) and Bade (a Nigerian) at the University of Southern Denmark below:

- (1)R: I'm attending a "tsaltsal" dansk now
(2)B: Saucer dansk?
(3)R: Yeah (high intonation) because I need to do it to avoid depression
(4)B: Oh! 'tsaltsal' dance! (raised intonation). Yes, you need to for you to be active
(5)R: yeah, u know you're active because your children/// bu...
(6)B: Yeah, that's true; you need to be engaged...
(7)R: (cut in) to whom? (high intonation)
(8)B: Oh... (raised voice) you have to be involved in different activities to be active!
(9)R: yeah, that's right (raised voice for agreement) to avoid depression
(*This conversation was recorded live at the University of Southern Denmark in February, 2016*)

In the above conversation, there was going to be a communication breakdown because of mis-contextualisation of the message produced. Although the two speakers share the grammatical knowledge of the English language, they differently contextualised some words. In line (6), Bade said "yeah, that's true; you need to be engaged" with reference to the context of what is being discussed but this was not properly picked up by Rummy who assumed the word 'engaged' to mean "being betrothed to a man for a marital relationship." As Jaspers (2012: 136) asserts, "in order to describe and explain meaningful communication, there is need to look at what indexical meanings are implied by the words in a particular context rather than only at the words themselves". The reason is that there are social repercussions when misunderstandings occur; one may be found unintelligible or impolite. Thus, to avoid misinterpretation, speakers flag/index meaningful contexts by using a limited but suggestive set of tools. The above conversation between Bade and Rummy will serve as the working text for our discussion in this paper to illustrate some of the concepts of IS.

3.Key Concepts in IS

There are two broad constructs Gumperz uses in his approach to IS to discourse. These are: *contextualisation cues* and *conversational inference*.

CONTEXTUALISATION CUES: Gumperz (1982a: 131) refers to these cues as "constellations of surface features of message form." As explained by Bailey (2008: 2314-2315), they are the means by which speakers signal

and listeners interpret what the activity is, how semantic content is to be understood and how each sentence relates to what precedes or follows. The cues range across semiotic modes which include varied phenomena such as prosody (e.g. intonation and stress), code and lexical choice, formulaic expressions, sequencing choices, and paralinguistic features such as visual and gestural codes. These are organised in a common, functional category by speakers to signal not only what they mean to say, but also what speech activity they are engaged in. In other words, what they think they are doing at each point in interaction (Tannen, 1992). Gumperz (1982a) submits that when contextualization cues are processed in co-occurrence with other cues, grammatical and lexical signs, they construct the contextual ground for situated interpretation and thereby affect how particular messages are understood.

As opined by Gumperz, contextualization cues are meta-pragmatic signs that are intrinsically oral forms. No utterance can be pronounced without them; hence they are ever present in talk. They affect interpretation by providing direct evidence for the necessary role that indexicality plays in talk. More importantly, they are used as contextualisation strategies to signal indirect inferences. Jaspers (2012: 137) says that, their much more subtle character, high user efficiency and complex interpretive consequences have made them significant as implicit/indirect signaling devices. Gumperz identified prosody and “accent” (i.e. phonetically marked features of pronunciation) among the principal means by which we identify where people are from and who they are, and assess their social identity as well as their social status, as indicated in the example above where the pronunciation of the word ‘dance’ as ‘dansk’ (the Danish word for dance, apparently an instance of code mixing) signals Rummy’s level of competence in English language. Rummy is an Iranian with Persian as her native language who is just learning English on her arrival to Denmark to pursue her graduate studies at the University of Southern Denmark, hence, she could not really distinguish between ‘dance’ as an English word and ‘dansk’ as the Danish term for dance.

Although loudness, intonation, accent, pitch or articulation rate do not mean anything by themselves, they acquire meaning when interpreted in a specific context (Jasper, *ibid*). Gumperz, (cited by Jaspers, 2012: 136), explained how these prosodic features can operationalise in the larger frame of contextualisation cues to denote meaning. For instance, Gumperz submits that a final rising intonation in the West is conventionally associated with tentativeness, whereas a falling intonation usually invokes definiteness and finality. Bailey (2008: 2315) gave an illustration of Gumperz’s (1982a: 173)

reports on how intonation in uttering a single word led to misunderstandings that damaged relations between South Asian immigrant cafeteria workers and Anglo British workers at a British airport. He reports:

When an Anglo British cafeteria server in this workplace offered gravy to a person in line, she would say “Gravy?” with a rising intonation contour. Anglo British workers used this prosodic information to interpret the utterance as an offer or question: “Would you like gravy?” In contrast, when recently-immigrated South Asian cafeteria workers asked employees if they wanted gravy, they said “Gravy” with falling intonation. Anglo British workers interpreted the falling intonation as contextualizing a statement (akin to “This is gravy – take it or leave it”), which they found redundant and rude. Neither Anglo British nor South Asian workers were able to articulate the role that intonation played in their problematic interactions until it was pointed out by outside trainers. Thus, while two groups may “speak the same language,” i.e., share syntax, phonology, and vocabulary, they may differ in the ways they meta-communicatively define the moment-to-moment activities in which they are engaging.

Given the above, it is evident that socio-cultural differences play a vital role in the negotiation of meaning in face-to-face exchange as the uses of the cues are culturally dependent. Gumperz argued that if one speaker is unable to distinguish important from less important information using contextualisation cues, that speaker will have trouble following the thread of the argument his interlocutor is making. Simply put, contextualisation cues represent speakers’ ways of signaling and providing information to interlocutors and audiences about how language is being used at any point in the ongoing exchange.

At the core of this theoretical framework is the notion of speech activity, an approach to IS that builds on Bateson’s (1972) concept of framing. As submitted by Tannen (1992: 10), Bateson points out that no message (the meaning of words or utterances) can be interpreted without reference to a meta-message about the frame. Using monkeys as an example, he notes that monkeys playing with each other seemed to be able to interpret some bites as playful rather than aggressive, even though biting is inherently an aggressive action. According to him, monkeys must send a ‘meta-message’ about the biting in order to indicate that the biting was not an act of aggression. This is significant for communication of meaning in IS as any utterance can mean the opposite of what it says if the speaker is operating in a frame of play, irony, joking, or teasing. Thus, the concept of framing provided the impetus for Gumperz work.

CONVERSATIONAL INFERENCE: This is another important element in Gumperz's approach to IS. Conversational inference, as posited by Tannen (2004), is an ongoing process of interpreting meaning which resides not only in the words spoken but in every aspect of how they are spoken. Gumperz (2001: 216) argues that, "all communication is intentional and grounded in inferences that depend upon the assumptions of mutual good faith." He is of the view that participants do not only glean meaning from words and phrases as they occur, they also make active predictions about what will come next, based on the line of interpretation suggested by on-going talk as measured against prior interactive experience. In Gumperz's view, speakers do not follow conversational rules, but rather are guided by interpretive norms which are continually reinforced or revised in the light of on-going interpretation. This is known as inferencing. Jaspers (2012: 136) says, "Inferencing inevitably entails improvisation and uncertainty, so that the meaning of a word can shift over the course of an encounter at the same time as the context it was thought to make sense in is adjustable, plastic and contestable."

According to Gumperz (2001: 221), conversational inference relies on two types of verbal signs which are: symbolic signs and indexical signs. While symbolic signs convey information through well-known lexical and grammatical rules, indexical signs do so through direct association between sign and context. Gumperz identified such terms like 'here' and 'there' or 'this' and 'that' as examples of indexicality used with the notion that what is intended in any one instance can only be understood with reference to some physical or discursive environment. In his (1982b) work, he explains that, conversationalists rely on indirect inferences which build on background assumption about context, interactive goals and interpersonal relations to derive frames in terms of which they can interpret what is going on.

Therefore, understanding the on-going interaction presupposes conversational involvement. He reiterates that the theory of discourse strategies, as espoused by IS, must first begin by specifying the linguistic and socio-cultural knowledge that needs to be shared if conversational involvement is to be maintained. These are also necessary in dealing with the nature of conversational inference that makes for cultural, subcultural and situational specificity of interpretation. Arguably, conversational inference is concerned with making assumptions and using procedures that are different from those used in either ethnography or grammatical analysis to negotiate meaning in conversation. It rests on conversational cooperation whereby interlocutors have to work together to develop and negotiate meaning in interaction.

As shown in our working text above, through conversational inference, Bade was able to discover that Rummy actually meant 'Tsalsal Dance' in (1) as the conversation proceeds. Although her response, a question, in line (2) shows that she could not understand what exactly Rummy meant due to mispronunciation by her Iranian accent, Bade got the clue of her intent from the clause 'to avoid depression' in line (3) the assumption that was finally confirmed in line (5) when Rummy said "yeah, u know you'r active because your children, hum, /// bu...". Bade's ability to make the right assumption in order to make sense of what Rummy is talking about sustains the tempo of the conversation else there would have been communication breakdown. Her ability to rely on extra communicative knowledge helps her to complete what Rummy wanted to say in line (5) and make sense of her incomplete talk. In line (5), Rummy was actually going to say that "Bade does not have to bother herself with such extra-curricular activity like her since she has her children around to keep her busy in addition with her research work." This affirms that interpretations presuppose shared knowledge which is not usually overtly verbalized; but serves as the input for judgments of what the speakers want to achieve. This is why Jaspers (2012: 135) posits that, "if talk is incomplete, interactants need to do completion work. They have to find out what unstated context a certain word flags or points at for it to be made sense of. "Any failure to pick up the right inference, however, definitely leads to miscommunication which can result in more social damage or frustration.

4. Features of IS

The indirect inferences play a significant role in IS as an approach to discourse analysis. Like Conversation Analysis (henceforth, CA), IS also focuses on naturally occurring interactions. Bailey (2008: 2316) posits that, "IS shares with CA an insistence on careful, line-by-line analysis of recorded, naturally occurring talk, but it diverges from CA in exploring inferential processes and social and cultural worlds outside of that talk." IS indicates that sequential analysis cannot by itself account for situated interpretation. Thus, while they share similar methodological approach as well as data set, they differ in theoretical orientations. CA focuses mainly on the verbal strategies by which interactants shape the progress of an encounter and achieve their communicative ends for instance, opening or closing conversations, greetings, making request, making amends, etc. (Gumperz, 2001). Conversely, IS concentrates on the concepts of contextualisation cues and conversational inferences to provide functional communicative framework for exploring meaning-making process at the intersection of talk and culture. IS is fundamentally interpretive, rather than predictive. According to

Gumperz (2001: 223), instead of taking interpretive processes for granted, IS analyses address three major questions: (1) what the most likely interpretations are? (2) what the assumptions and inferential processes are by which they are achieved?, and (3) how they relate to what is literally said? Thus, three things are of significance to IS: situated interpretation, strategic interaction and diversity.

5. Key Studies in IS

IS is like ethnography of communication which pays attention to linguistic structures, social and cultural contexts of talk to negotiate the intents of interactants. The major theme in IS at its inception is miscommunication in western urban workplace settings. This is concerned with gate keeping encounters between people from different ethnic backgrounds, whereby clients or lay people have to interact with interviewers and experts who have different interpretive premises (Jaspers, 2012). Gumperz's (1982a, 1982b, 2001) and Roberts et al. (1992) are key studies in this area. The works reveal how people deploy linguistic and paralinguistic features known as "contextual cues" as explained earlier, to flag their intent in talk. However, the works reveal that the uses as well as meanings of these cues differ cross-culturally which if not recognized can "shipwreck conversation, disadvantage certain social groups, damage work place relations and confirm dominant stereotypes and race inequality" (cf. Gumperz, 2001 and Jasper, 2012). Schiffrin (1994) also reveals how a multi-ethnic classroom can be a place where misinterpretation can occur. Drawing on Gumperz's (1982a) illustration of the encounter between a white teacher and a Black-American pupil's classroom exchange, Schiffrin demonstrates how Gumperz's contextualisation cues can affect the interpretation of a message. Through the teacher-pupil exchange, Schiffrin shows how a rising intonation in an African-American community indicates a desire to be encouraged as flagged in James' (the pupil) response "I don't know" to the teacher's invitation to answer a question. This cue was not picked by the teacher who took James' response as a refusal and an unwillingness to participate in the classroom activity (cf. Schiffrin, 1994).

The cross-cultural paradigm of communication was extended by Tannen in her 1984 and 2005 research to account for conversation among Americans of different subcultural backgrounds. Her work shows how individuals are influenced by factors such as regional, ethnic, class, age, and gender differences in developing unique blends of signaling habits. These habits, according to her, together make up an individual's conversational style which amounts to slightly or grossly different systems used to signal meaning

and to accomplish framing in interaction (Tannen, 1992: 10). The research shows that when participants share similar interpretive norms meaning is likely to be understood as intended but if otherwise intentions are likely to be misjudged. Her research shows that miscommunication is not restricted to cross-cultural speakers but even to speakers of the same native language who may use conversational cues differently, depending on various factors that have influenced them. Another aspect that the study in IS has opened up is that “misunderstanding does not automatically follow from contrastive cueing habits” (Jaspers, 2012: 140). This is shown in the work of Erickson and Shultz (1982). Their research shows how willingness on the part of speakers in face-to-face interaction to overlook momentary challenges in understanding each other irrespective of their cultural differences helps mitigate occurrences of trouble in communication. They describe this as ‘situational co-membership’, the absence of which can lead to varying degree of troubles such as miscommunication and stereotypification among interactants with different communication styles. Yamada (1997) also, provides insight into various kinds of intercultural miscommunication. He identifies a range of causative factors, which include uses of address terms, the structuring of information in discourse, and uses of pacing, pausing, and intonation.

Questions have also been studied as important aspect of IS. Interactional Sociolinguistic analysts see questions as powerful devices for implicature and indirect communication whereby they are interpreted as hinting unstated meaning rather than directly requesting information (Scollon and Scollon, 1981 cited by Tannen, 1992: 11). In recent times, the scope of IS has been opened up to account for how small-scale interaction reveals a constant tension between interactants’ here-and-now concerns. Jaspers (2012) observes that analysts now study exchanges between friendship groups or practice communities both in leisure time and school contexts where there is high propensity for shared background knowledge. Their major interest, however, is to examine how people in these contexts “invoke, avoid or reconfigure the cultural and symbolic attendants on lines and identities with different degrees of accessibility and purchase in different situations” (Rampton, 2001 cited by Jaspers, 2012: 141). They also want to see how people, as a result of that, position themselves in a group and in wider-scale contexts. Thus, today’s studies in IS has moved beyond the issue of miscommunication or routine cues in cross-cultural face-to-face exchanges. Attention is now being paid to the relation between micro-interaction and its production of, as well as possible challenge to, wider or dominant social contexts (Jaspers, 2012).

6. The Method of IS

IS is a speaker-oriented approach to conversation. It is an implicit method to discourse that utilises eclectic tools. It focuses on naturally occurring talk with particular interest in line-by-line detailed investigation of such exchange. To be able to do an IS analysis, an analyst needs “first-hand data that are as rich as possible” (Jaspers 2012: 142). This means doing some ethnographic fieldwork in order to get familiarised with the “local communicative ecology” (Gumperz 2001: 223) of the participants. After this, one has to identify recurrent patterns in interaction that will yield communicative data relevant to research problem at hand which is to be recorded digitally or on tape. This is very crucial as it is practically impossible to memorize every detail of an interaction and later reconstruct for such a detailed analysis IS requires. As Jaspers (ibid) observes, recordings allow the analyst to revisit the recorded scene as much as they like to check hypotheses. The next stage after this is the transcription of the recordings. This is a time demanding task; however, it helps the analysts mark off important extracts relevant to their research goal (cf. Jaspers, 2012). Gumperz’s research on the British English-speaking and Indian English-speaking Londoners, followed these steps:

- Tape-recorded and transcribed interaction among speakers of different cultural or subcultural backgrounds
- Interviewed participants separately to gain insight into their interpretations of the interaction, and to identify the linguistic phenomena which led to their interpretations
- Where possible, compared instances of cross-cultural communication with recordings of similar speech events involving participants of a single cultural background
- Examined the tape and transcript to identify the linguistic strategies for signaling frames, and identified speech activities which were differentially interpreted by the culturally different participants
- Explained how the cultural differences in interpretive norms led to the differing interpretations, and consequently the breakdown in communication
- Checked the cultural basis of interpretive norms by playing segments of the interaction for other members of the cultural groups represented, to see if their reported interpretations follow patterns similar to those identified for participants.

The above steps serve as guidelines to the methodological procedure for doing an IS analysis, however, there is room for modification and creativity depending on the research goal. Considering the impact of technology on today's communication, interaction is no longer restricted to face-to-face physical events. Interactions could be done on telephone or online and these media of communication have a part to play in deciding on the methodological procedure apt for doing an IS analysis of such natural exchanges. Like CA, one can also do an IS analysis of a text e.g., a drama text or even a stage play as long as there are instances of contextualization cues that signal specific communicative effects and interpretive patterns.

However, the compulsion of the availability of natural conversation necessitates that such plays be the performed or recorded ones. Thus, while participant observation method and recordings will play a vital role in doing an IS analysis of a naturally occurring interaction, a close reading method will be the suitable route to extracting instances of verbal interaction relevant for an IS analysis of a text.

Since the basic notion of IS is that all interaction is strategic (that is, significant for meaning), ultimately, the IS analysts are to focus on the strategies that govern the speakers' use of lexical, grammatical, sociolinguistic and other knowledge in the production and interpretation of messages in context. Thus, the task of IS analysts involves making an in depth study of selected instances of verbal interaction, observing whether or not speakers understand each other and eliciting participants' interpretations of what goes on in interaction. This is done by (a) deducing the social assumptions that speakers must have made in order to act as they do, and (b) determining empirically how linguistic signs communicate in the interpretation process. The interpretations, however, presuppose shared knowledge which is not usually overtly verbalized. Rather, it serves as the input for judgements of what the speakers want to achieve (Gerogieva, 2014). In achieving all these, IS analysts have to rely on typified characteristics of the signaling process known as contextualisation cues, earlier discussed. As

Gumperz (1982: 36) rightly observes, the fact that the analysis relies on the everyday knowledge which is acquired through common tradition and shared communicative experience, makes IS of interest for the study of social symbolism.

7. Sample Analysis

In addition to our working text as a sample for doing an IS analysis of talk, we have culled from Jaspers (2012) a data-sample to show how IS experts analyse extracts from naturally occurring talk. Often times, the intentional

goal of the researcher at the outset of the research may not be met but there are so many interesting discoveries IS researchers make when they begin to interact with their target groups as they collect data. This was Jaspers' experience in his fieldwork in Belgium (see Jaspers, 2012). Jaspers interviewed a set of ethnic minority students in a multi-ethnic school in Antwerp, Belgium classified as incompetent and unwilling speakers of Dutch who then turned out to regularly switch from one variety of Dutch to another for special effect while excelling in what they called 'doing ridiculous' (Jaspers 2012: 142). This caught Jaspers' attention and he became interested in identifying how interaction and language use related, challenged, or diverged from widespread interactional conventions. Below is the interview with Mourad, Adnan and Moumir (20, 19 and 21 years of age, respectively), all of Moroccan descent and in their last year of secondary education. Jasper asked them "in which cases they think they'll be needing Standard Dutch".

- 1 JJ: and what exactly will you be needing from it?
2 A: (you learn) to talk better or something [...] when you go
3 and apply for a for a job or something [...] then at least you
4 won't be making a fool of yourself
5 Mr.: that was last year () also uh [...] could write a letter
6 like that I've done such- such such an application letter [...]
7 JJ: yeah
8 Mr.: and uh [...] and this year we're also going to be seeing this
9 isn't it? [viz: the letter] [...] isn't it guys? and uh [...] so uh [...]
yeah
10 Md&A: [laughing] [2.0]
11 Md: [close to microphone, smile voice:] *so you are a repeater*
12 [laughter]
13 A: MoumirTalhaoui [laughs]
14 Mr: ()
15 [laughter]
16 Md: 22 YEARS OLD
17 JJ: | (and do you have)
18 [laughter]
19 JJ: but [...] but [...] right when you uh when you take a look at [etc.]

As Jasper pointed out, there is no miscommunication in the extract as regards the question the researcher presented to the students. However, it is observed

that Moumir suffers face-loss in the conversation as his answer sells him out as a repeater of that class. His effort to seek approval of his statement from his friends in lines 8-9 by saying 'isn't it guys?' signals his status in that group as a repeater and reveals that his friends are not. In that case, they cannot confirm if they are going to write a job application letter. This realization is clear in Moumir's second question for confirmation, which this time also involves an address ('guys'), whereas before he only used a 'we' to which he also counted himself. Moumir is, in other words, putting himself in a different position than his two classmates, and suddenly becomes someone who is addressing them about what they can expect this year in class. Moumir stops talking in line 9 as his friends begin to make a jest of him by laughing in line 10. The statement 'so you are a repeater' by Mourad in line 11 spells out the real cause of Moumir's face-loss and silence. As Jaspers noted, Mourad's disclosure of Moumir's status as a repeater was done in a stylized Standard Dutch: he uses careful pronunciation and the formal pronoun 'u' [you], which eventually provides the other participants with a sudden piece of showcase behaviour that acts as a special cue for the others to appreciate the relevance of. In this case, Mourad assumes the role of a teacher, or higher authority, which depicts certain nuances of meaning that are obtainable in a wider-social context, i.e., a teacher/pupil relation.

Relating the relevance of what plays out in this micro-context to a macro-context, Jaspers notes that Mourad's use of stylized Standard Dutch right at that sequential position (line 11), which is a self-selected turn after Moumir's answer is usually the prerogative of turn-allocating authorities such as teachers and interviewers. He, further, explains that it is not unreasonable to claim that Mourad, aptly and humorously – or at least to his own and Adnan's enjoyment – rises to the occasion to disclose a failed school identity we all already know of in a teacher-like, educationally successful, voice – which, because of its sequential position, seems to ventriloquize that Jasper would presumably find it important or worth mentioning in the interview; which is perhaps why Mourad assures the acoustic audibility of his stylization (by speaking very closely into the table-top microphone) and why he gave the extra, but unnecessary, biographical information about Moumir in lines 13 and 16. Thus, three important things play out in the extract which Jaspers classifies as follows: (1) a playful reconfiguration of the interview's intentions (registering school failure rather than opinions on language); (2) inauthentic use of Standard Dutch, which throws its ideologically neutral character into comical relief; and (3) an intuition of how small-scale interactions at school, such as a research interview, can contribute

to more macro-discursive processes that position people differently in hierarchical social patterns.

Given the above, it is observed that IS approach to discourse goes beyond structural arrangements of words in interaction, rather it views discourse as an arrangement of habitual social practices that inform the way people relate with one another. This means interactions do not exist in a vacuum. There are established structures that social interactions usually gravitate towards reproducing which provide frames for doing an empirical analysis of discourse. These structures give “a two-way connection between local happenings and larger-scale processes” (Jaspers 2012: 140) as revealed in the sample analysis above. Thus, in IS, as Jaspers (*ibid*) posits, “...language use is seen as one of the primary resources for social actors (interactants) to actively shape and re-shape their social surroundings.”

IS often integrates discourse-analytic dimensions in data analysis and unlike CA, it allows a level of categorisation in its analysis. The notion of confluence between rests on the fact that IS like other approaches to Discourse Analysis is a research tradition that involves collection and careful analysis of actual talk-in-interaction. It attempts to answer many kinds of questions about language, speakers, society and culture like other conversational discourse approaches. Usually, the themes and concerns of Discourse Analysis approaches to conversation overlap which sometimes makes it challenging to clearly identify a researcher with a discrete approach.

Notwithstanding, each of the traditions, as Gordon (2011: 106) opines, has its particulars of data collection method, preferred terminologies and theories, and specific analytical steps that more often than not unites with other conversational discourse traditions in the exploration of its key themes that stem from earlier theorizing about the self, interaction and social life. The umbilical cord, however, that links IS with other conversational discourse approaches as opined by Gordon (*ibid*) borders on the major research themes they all focus on which are:

- the exploration of conversation as a structured and emergent phenomenon;
- the exploration of conversation as a collaborative endeavor;
- the exploration of conversation as an interpersonal and social ritual;
- the exploration of conversation as a cultural phenomenon; and
- the exploration of conversation as a locus of action.

These are the major concerns of all the approaches to Discourse Analysis including IS, however, each of them has its own peculiar techniques of data collection and analysis.

8. Importance of IS/ Conclusion

The contribution of IS to discourse studies is enormous. Below is a few of them:

First, it provides a methodological procedure for analysing how social knowledge and linguistic knowledge intersect in the construction of meaning in talk. Through this method, IS is able to reveal in a systematic way how inequality and conflicting interests are negotiated in talk as well as how diversity (cultural and linguistic differences) can play out in such interaction. The approach has shown how improper management of such diversity in talk can have negative implications on relationship. This is displayed in the interaction between Rummy and Bade in the first conversation.

Through its eclectic toolbox, we are able to have insights into the socio-cultural nature of communicative action. The consideration of surface forms, such as prosody, words, gestures, etc., help to account for the way and manner in which different aspects of communicative behavior are related. Thus, IS views communication as irrevocably a social event where the identity and relations of the interactants matter. This also falls within the purview of discourse analysis.

IS approaches discourse ‘through the worm’s eye, not the bird’s’ (Rampton 2001, cited by Jaspers, 2012: 141). It gives detailed attention to how interaction is constructed as a microcosm of a larger social process as shown in the second sample. IS puts interaction under microscope to explicate different levels of conversational involvement in communication which are ‘collaboration, collusion and negotiation,’ (Jaspers, *ibid*). As an approach to discourse analysis it makes explicit the relevance of background knowledge to the appropriate interpretation of talks/conversations in context.

IS provides useful insights for L2 teachers about how to navigate teaching techniques in their classroom. It shows how teachers can retrieve the contextualisation presuppositions needed for accurate interpretation of their pupils’ messages from their use of contextualisation cues. This further reiterates its importance to discourse analysis with regards to classroom discourse – teacher/pupils interactions.

We end on the note that, IS analysis, as Gumperz (2001: 226) asserts, is applicable to communicative situations of all kinds, monolingual or multilingual, as a means of monitoring the communication processes that are so important in institutional life. This also signals its significant relevance to

discourse analysis as a linguistic framework that examines different forms of interaction process that interlocutors utilise based on the context of discourse.

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