Relationships and knowledge

Within conversations there are a multitude of factors that influence the language being spoken. Heritage (2010) highlights that relationships and epistemics in particular are factors that affect conversation. According to previous studies Heritage (2010) summarizes that speakers are sensitive to their epistemic positions in regards to addressees and sequence initiations. In response to this sensitivity speakers register information conveyed via indexation of the interaction (heritage, 2010). Therefore, through communication, knowledge is transferred; such knowledge can in turn affect the future of the speakers. Due to this evolution of knowledge within a relationship there would be levels of knowledge that are also associated with the language used between those speakers. It can be deduce then that the previous and current status of the speakers’ relationship affects the language used. There are several other factors with relationships; similar to previously learned knowledge, that influence communication between speakers.

***Factors of relationships***

One such factor is the notion of epistemic stance, which is how speakers adapt to the recognition of schisms in domains of knowledge (Heritage, 2010). Epistemic stance is important because it seeks to define the areas in which speakers are divided. Only once a lack of common knowledge is realized is when it can be rectified, which means there first needs to be an event in which the speakers recognize one another as more knowledgeable in regards to certain domains of knowledge. This differentiation is known as epistemic status. However, the main point of focus here is epistemic stance since it is the way in which epistemic status is approached. This also ties into the idea of territories of knowledge and event domination. In these certain instances where one speaker is more knowledgeable than the other they become the more dominant speaker and therefore leads the conversation (Heritage, 2010).

Despite the aforementioned division of knowledge, within relationships there also exist areas in which speakers relate to one another. These commonalities can be explained by epistemic communities, which heritage (2013) defines as certain groups that are formed via the knowledge that is socially distributed amongst the members of that particular epistemic community. Heritage (2013) also continues on to say that based on this explanation of an epistemic community “every view, trade, and profession and hobby constitutes an epistemic community” (p.371). Therefore, two speakers can belong to several common epistemic communities in which they relate, while also belonging to other communities in which they differ, and thus have a lack of congruency of knowledge. However, the more epistemic communities in which the two speakers are involved the more likely the two speakers relate to one another.

***Evolution of relationships and interjectory oh***

As seen through the concepts of epistemic stance and communities, relationships greatly influence communication. Based on the level of intimacy between two speakers and the amount of knowledge they share about one another the language that they use is affected, especially compared to a set of speakers who are not as intimate and do not belong to as wide of a variety of epistemic communities. Therefore, through communication there is an increased amount of knowledge divulged and closeness gained in which language is altered and evolves. Despite this, there will still be instances in which speakers do not share the same knowledge and therefore must gain new information, which can be visualized in data as certain interjections.

Within conversation there are several ways in which it is possible to assess levels of knowledge, one being the use of the interjection *oh*. Based on previous explanations of the primary interjection oh, Norrick (2009) deduces that due to its reactive nature it does not expression emotional involvement but instead evidentiality. This is because oh is usually used in instances of reaction to newly given information, whether it be expected or unexpected.

***Oh in conversation***

Within a conversation between two individuals that share knowledge regarding each other and belong to similar epistemic communities there exists a plethora of instances in which this interjectory is used in different ways.

The first environment oh occurs is after an answer to a question and before another question based on a false assumption. Since a questioner is more attentive to the answer or divulgence they therefore react in some sort of way -- commonly by use of the expression "oh" (Heritage, 2013, pp. 373-374). However, in order for this to occur there must be a preceding interaction or some sort of knowledge assumed about the individual, which occurs below:

61 of you. °I love animals so much hh°

62 B: What is that: from?

63 J: =IT’S KRYSTYNA? it was really funny. hh I

64 kinda I wish you were there. hh (.)

65 B: Oh? [°was that in NC°

66 J: [It was really cu(hh)te °actually. ° >Huh?<

67 B: It. <Was it in North Carolina?>

68 J: No, it was like right before: we left and then

Since speaker B was not aware of the story and had not heard it before they assumed the topic had occurred in a situation where they were not present. Also, there was a gap between the two speakers’ knowledge that indicates that they had differing epistemic stances. It is also visible that there is a relationship between the subject being mentioned and the two speakers engaged in conversation. Moreover, there was no previous mention of North Carolina in the conversation. Therefore speaker B had previous knowledge in regards to the subject. This excerpt highlights the importance of relationships within a conversation and also shows how oh can be used as a response to a question.

As the conversation continues there are two more immediate instance of oh usage. The first of these occurring in line 73 and the other in line 74:

69 (.) um I was playing with the cat- I was saying

70 bye to kitty. hh and then hh and[

71 B: [WAIT? WHos↑ CAT?

72 J: =Taylor and Elisa.

73 B: =Oh Sim↑ba.

74 J: Yeaahh hh. Kitty slash shi:t (rising)head. Oh! hh

75 Speaking of shit (.) I hafta tell you guys

76 something really funny. So you think[

Oh used in these situations was in response to recognition. Both of the speakers had triggered memories and therefore made use of the interjection. In the first situation speaker B’s memory was triggered through what speaker J was explaining. However, the second oh in line 74 was self triggered and abruptly placed in the middle of the speaker’s utterance.

Since the oh in line 73 was triggered through the other speakers elaboration it shows that the two share common knowledge about the subject, which is apparent by the follow-up question after speaker B expresses recognition. This is not the case in line 74 seeing as the oh started a new story that speaker B had not previously heard. Therefore, while the oh is still verbally spoken and processed by speaker B and followed up by the speaker themselves as something they will tell in the future, it is still indicated evidentiality and not emotion (Norrick, 2009). Another example of oh is seen within the misunderstand below that occurred earlier in the same conversation:

1 J: °I don’t think he’s gonna take

2 me to molokai°

3 B: =Take [you to a leper

4 J: [Unless it was [to kill me. hh

5 B: [leper colony.

6 J: leopard colony. (.) oh! Leper!

7 B: Leper hh. Yea. That where they send all the

8 lepers.

9 J: =oh you’re right:. I forgot hh about that.

10 B: you would love a leopard colony. hh

The use of “oh” in this situation addresses the fact that speaker J misheard speaker B and later notices this. Oh acts as a verbal indication of this realization. Aside from the use of oh to verbally indicate knowledge recognition, the relationship between the speakers also affects the flow of conversation. The fact that Speaker B can pinpoint the reason for which speaker J has misheard the question, which indicates that speaker B has knowledge about speaker J and can joke about the reason for the initial misunderstanding.

Overall within these example oh is used as a tool to indicate recognition. While the situations in which oh occurs varies, it is still in response to some sort of knowledge whether newly gained or triggered. The relationship of the speakers is also visible through the use of oh since in several instance oh was triggered based on the other speakers explanation. Therefore, oh was the enlightened speakers verbal response to the other speaker’s elicitations.

It is also apparent that there is an intimate relationship between the two speakers based on their background knowledge of each other. While they share certain epistemic communities, there are also instances where they do not, and therefore the epistemic status between the speakers varies and they must then change rolls and converse based on epistemic stance.

***Preference in relationships***

In regards to relationships it is also important to look at preference. Preference is when participants act and react in a variety ways depending on interactional situations (Pomerantz, 2013). While there may be more formulaic norms in certain instances there may also be a lack thereof in others.

Another key feature of preference is that of recipient design, which requires speakers to orient their speech to the recipients. This is done in order to make the subject more relatable to the targeted recipient by connecting it to something the speaker and recipient mutually know. This relation connected via knowledge the speaker knows about the recipient also ties into the knowledge of relationship aforementioned. This type of formulation is also visible in the previous example in which oh was examined. In the first example where speaker B did not recognize the story they assumed it occurred in a situation they were not existant. Therefore they asked a questioner-preferred answer, which is a question formulated with expectations of what the answer will be (Pomerantz, 2013). This question occurs in line 67:

67 B: It. <Was it in North Carolina?>

68 J: No, it was like right before:

The speaker asks a question assuming the answer however, in this instance the assumption was false, which requires speaker J to correct speaker B. This assumption could not have been made without background knowledge as previously discussed and this encounter also would not have occurred were the event not that of an A-event in which only one speaker has knowledge of the subject.

Factors that affect language range to that of the relationship of the speakers, the knowledge they have about each other and the ways in which they follow implicit norms of preference. Pomerantz (2013) concludes his paper with an emphasis on preference and its importance:

Participants make determinations about the appropriateness/ inappropriateness of agreeing, disagree, accepting, rejecting, correcting, requesting, and so on, based in the context, so studying preference principles as they relate to how the participants view each other and the situation is a promising direction for future studies. (pp. 225-226)

Therefore, it is not only important to understand how relationships relate to knowledge but also how it relates to preference principles and how these factors correlate to one another. As seen above from the conversation of two close individuals even though they have a vast knowledge of each other there are still instance of miscommunication. Moreover, despite their knowledge they still follow preference forms. Within conversation it is natural to associate to the other member of the conversation despite the level of closeness and despite how much knowledge the speakers know about one another.

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