Love Ya Hate Ya
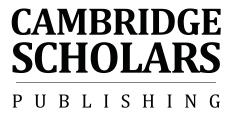
Love Ya Hate Ya:
The Sociolinguistic Study of Youth Language and Youth Identities

Edited by

J. Normann Jørgensen

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FOREWORD

This volume is collected to show the range of linguistic variation in youth language as a phenomenon in negotiations of identities and social relations, particularly in late modern urban societies. This is an area of study which has been gaining ancreasing attention in sociolinguistics over the past few years. An observation that is almost inevitable is that there are a string of similarities to be found between youths in quite different circumstances, ranging from university students in Argentina over juvenile delinquents in Greece and to skaters in Greenland. The papers document and analyze linguistic youth styles and behaviors as well as attitudes, and in its totality they attempt to present a picture of youth language as functional, socially valuable, and flexible - with a special emphasis on identity negotiations.

All the papers which appear in this volume have undergone anonymous peer reviews. My colleagues who have, more or less, volunteered to act as peer reviewers for this purpose, and who have helped out with this sometimes tedious task deserve many thanks for their unselfish efforts. Whatever errors of judgement may remain, are none of their responsibility, but only mine.

The peer reviewers are, mentioned in a completely arbitrary order and with no relationship to the order of the contents of this volume:

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I also wish to thank all the contributors who have offered their papers to this volume, for their work, and not the least for their patience in adjusting to the suggestions of peer reviewers and the editor. It has been a pleasure to work with excellent scholars from such a range of environments.

—J. Normann Jørgensen
Copenhagen, December 2009

THE SOCIOLINGUISTIC STUDY OF YOUTH LANGUAGE AND YOUTH IDENTITIES

J. NORMANN JØRGENSEN

The concept of *identity* usually comes up early in studies of youth behavior, particularly youth language. This is also the case in sociolinguistics which has witnessed an increasing interest in the relationships between language and identity over the past few decades. During these years the understanding of of identity as such has been quite different from the perspective of classical sociolinguistics. In classical sociolinguistics identites were more or less stable characteristics of an individual. Studies such as Labov (1966) and Trudgill (1974) took it for granted that every individual could be meaningfully categorized in one of a limited set of socioeconomic categories, and that the language behavior of people reflect their category membership. Milroy (1980) suggests a more refined identity concept based not only on socioeconomic class, but also on the type of social network to which the indivdual belongs. Milroy, however, also considers language variation to be an effect of social structure, of the speakers belonging to different categories, having well-defined social identities.

 In a traditional, narrow sense, "your identity" is "who you are". In traditional societies, certain characteristics of individuals are determined by their family relations, although not for genetic reasons, but for social reasons. The village blacksmith's oldest son was destined to become the village blacksmith, and therefore his status in the community, his future role of husband and father, and much more was fixed. "Who he was" was more or less a given thing. Durkheim (1893) presents the distinction between traditional societies in which members shared their life conditions and consequently were subjected to strong social control administered by a shared consciousness. Identity was not an issue.

In traditional societies place of origin (i.e. the place where one lived one's life) was a defining criterion of who one was. The solidarity, in

Durkheim's terms, was mechanical, whereas in modern society an organic soclidarity grew out of changed life conditions. Modern society was characterized by industrialization, and a defining criterion of who one was, became class. The shared consciousness was no longer there, and class consciousness (if ever such a phenomenon was) had to be developed.

With modernization the nation state developed. Z. Bauman argues that the concept of identity grew out of the nation state's need to control its citizens, to coerce them into behavior that suited the nation state's survival.

> The idea of "identity", and a "national identity" in particular, did not gestat and incubate in human experience "naturally", did not emerge out of that experience as a self-evident "fact of life". That idea was *forced* into ther *Lebenswelt* of modern men and wome - and arrived as a *fiction* (Z. Bauman 2004, 20, italics in the original).

Power was concentrated in the organizations of the nation state, and its citizens were encouraged to think of themselves as members of the nation state rather than members of a societal cross-national class. The notion of national identity arose.

As modernity gave way to new developments after World War II, a different modernity grew, which removed the focus on the nation state. This is so-called postmodernity, or with the term we use here: late modenity. Power gradually shifted to supra-state or cross-state units, commercial or non-commercial. Accordingly, the identity of the individual was no longer fixed by one or the other societal structure, but became a truly individual resposibility. Furthermore, the concept of *an* identity as the essence of a person was substituted by a view of identity as flexible and negotiable. In this perspective you do not have an identity, but you have access to a range of resources which you may employ in your attempts to present yourself with identity characteristics.

The rather simplistic view of identity, even if it were ever a real representation of citizens in traditional societies, is rejected by present-day sociologists as well as sociolinguists, as a non-concept in late modern societies.

> In our fluid world, committing oneself to a single identity for life, or even for less than a whole life but for a very long time to come, is a risky business. Identities are for wearing and showing, not for storing and keeping (Z. Bauman 2004, 89)

Not only Z. Bauman, but also Beck (1986) describes late modern society as full of risk, and uncertainty. In modern society the individual was attached to, and defined by, reference groups - including class and nation. In late modern society the individual to a much larger extent belongs to groups according to choice which is not determined by birth or class. Accordingly what was a class-related condition, almost a destiny, is now substituted by the individual's own risk.

Late modern society is characterized by fluidity. This view has been accompanied by a critique of the view of the nation state as a given - or even very old - phenomenon (Anderson 1991), and a critique of the concepts of national traditions as characteristic of nations and their peoples (Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983). As the different points of reference were questioned, the resposibility for identities became individual, and identities are considered to be issues of *negotiation* in late modern society. Thisdoes not mean that there are no regularities. According to Beck, the inequalities which characterized modernity are still real in late modern society. Since everybody has become richer, however, the driving force which could lead to class consciousness and lived class identity, has disappeared. Unemployment is no longer a phenomenon pertaining to collectively struck workers, but a result of individual conditions. Florida (2002, 2005) describes late modern societies as domiated by an elite type which he labels the *creative class*. This notion covers a wide range of job functions such as scientists, architects, designers, writers, engineers, and artists. It is characteristic of this elite that it is not organized, and the indivduals do not necessarily see themselves as members. There is therefore no basis for the development of a class consciousness and no given accompanying social identity.

Late modern sociolinguists share the concept of identity as fluid and negotiable with sociologists. In addition, the criticism by among others Williams (1992) that sociolinguistics was weak on theory about society, has been taken into account (e.g., by Coupland et al. 2001). Blommaert (2005) is a book on Discourse, and it devotes an entire chapter precisely to Identity. Blommaert proposes that identity be seen not as "a property or a stable category, but as *particular forms of semiotic potential, organised in a repertoire*" (Blommaert 2005, 207, original italics). Language users create, construct, and negotiate identities on the basis of a range of resources which can be associated with meaning. To the extent that such resources are part of language, identities are constructed and negotiated in linguistic discourse. Blommaert stresses that this is not a free-for-all.

Access to resources is very unevenly distributed among speakers. Identities are related to linguistic resources in complex ways which are rarely unequivocal. Linguistic features may be associated with very different identities and become evaluated very differently under different circumstances.

> Identities, lige the semiotic resources by means of which they are enacted, are part of a stratified system, and the particular stratification of identities and their resources will depend on the particular environment (Blommaert 2005, 211).

People use language in several different environments. It is characteristic of late modern human beings that they belong to several different groups, organizations, communities, etc. Most people are family members, belong to a group with a specific relation to the job market, and regularly participate in activities in informal groupings. Any automobile repairman is also likely to be a son, he may guard the goal at the local football team, go to the movies every second Friday with a group of friends, help out in the local ngo second-hand store on the first Sunday of every month, etc. All of these environments are likely to have developed different evaluations, different meanings, to specific semiotic resources which they consider salient for their group. Each of these environments provides our repairman with a range of semiotic resources with which he can signal his intention to be taken as a member of the particular group. Even more important, all these resources are available to him at all times, but they may – and are often likely to – change, in the sense that they will be taken to mean different things and be evaluated differently in different environments. This fact may be used by our repairman to adjust the way he presents himself under specific circumstances. However, as Blommaert (2005, 205) also observes, a personal presentation of identity is not a completely free choice. People are also taken to be somebody. Although identities are performed, constructed, enacted, produced, or whatever term we use for the act that signals identity work, it only accomplishes an identity when it is recognized as such by others. Identities arise in interaction among people. Some identities are associated by others to persons without their intention to achieve the specific identity (for instance an identity as a blabbermouth, as a son-of-a-bitch, or as a bore).

These observations lead us to the insight that identities to a large extent are subject to *negotiations*. In interaction speakers continuously work on their identities in the sense that it is important to them what others think about them, and how they others evaluate their contributions to the

interaction. Goffman's concept of face (1967) is often cited as an important notion in this context, but this is not our focus here. Instead we can note that speakers establish and negotiate positions in their interactions from which they work to establish, negotiate, or maintain identities. Speakers may even experiment with ways to attempt establishing identities. This is particularly so among the youth, and therefore the study of identity work has attracted attention among sociolinguists. Rampton (1995) describes the linguistic behaviour of adolescents in ayouth club. They represent very different linguistic backgrounds, including Bengali, London English, and Caribbean Creole English. The young speakers, however, would occasionally use features which so to say belonged to others, i.e. a Bengali-English youth could use Creole expressions, etc. Rampton labels such behaviour *crossing*, and he argues (1995, 315f.) that "crossing occurred in moments, activities and relationships in which the hold of ordinary assumptions about social reality was loosened in some way". The adolescents were aware of how each of the others was associated with ethnic icentities, and they tuned their behaviour in order not to insult the others, but on the other hand – in situations "when the hold of ordinary assumptions about social reality was loosened" – they could challenge such ascriptions and the evaluations that accompany them in society at large. In other words, adolescents may use linguistic means to negotiate social categories which are often assigned to individuals by higher-level discourses. Ethnicity is one such category type.

> Based on ethnographically derived categories, research is thus concerned with situated communities emerging around aesthetic preferences, hobbies and commodities such as music styles or video games [...] A common denominator of such approaches is the assumption that youth identities cannot be understood outside their particular socio-cultural context. While the globalization of cultural commodities and the subsequent homogenization tendencies in youth culture are not denied, there is a concern with the ways in which globally available resources are actively and creatively appropriated by young actors in local contexts (Androutsopoulos & Georgakopoulou 2003, 3)

Eckert (1989) has analyzed the language behaviour of the students at a suburban high school in the United States. She finds that the young people position themselves in relation to a perceived scale between "burnouts" and "jocks", the poles of a continuum reaching from oppositional, non-school oriented, independent behavior to school-oriented, mainstream, authority-abiding behavior. Being a burnout entails specific ways of

dressing, specific behaviours and interests – and specific linguistic behaviour. Jockness entails exactly the opposite characteristics on all these variables. The majority of young people are "in-betweens", however, being able to act more or less jock-like. Nevertheless, all of the young people would be able to place themselves on the scale between extreme burnout and extreme jock. The categorization is negotiable, and it is to a certain extent one that the individual can choose to adjust.

The identities available to young people are thus not only the categories which appear in public discourses, such as ethnicity and gender, but also locally determined and defined categories. Maegaard (2007) refines this further in a study of the linguistic behaviour of a group of adolescents, the students in two classes in a city school in Copenhagen. She determines that the young people are grouped in ways that they can describe and define. Some of the groups they also have terms for, such as "the nerds", "the Danes", and the "foreigners". Other categories are traditional, such as "girls" and "boys". The resulting complex of groupings shows clear patterns of similar, or at least parallel, behavior among the members in a given group. Maegaard compares the linguistic behavior of each of the groups with respect to a set of recent developments in Copenhagen spoken Danish. She finds that there are clear differences among the groups. In a guise test she has played voices representing her groups to grade school students elsewhere in Copenhagen, and to a large extent the students from entirely different parts of Copenhagen charactarize the voices in the same terms as the students themselves. The types are, in other words, recognizable across environments. Nevertheless, the categories and types do not appear in the general public discourse about young people. These are categories developed among young people.

Madsen (2008) has studied the linguistic practices among several groups who attend a sports club in a working class quarter of Copenhagen. She finds that the young people are aware of the stereotypical categorizations which abound in the general public, but at the same time they both exploit and oppose these stereotypical categorizations. Most prominently, adolescent boys may at one at the same time present an identity as school-oriented, bright top students as well as elite athletes – and streetwise gangsta kids. They express no concern that there could be a contradiction in such self-positioning. On the contrary, Madsen finds convincing evidence that this is routine behavior. The young people in her study do indeed in some of their behaviors adapt to standard general categories, particularly gender – but there is nothing that prevents them from opposing

general categorizations and substituting them with oppositional category types.

The risk-laden, anti-establishment, streetwise identity resources are attractive and carry prestige while they are simultaneously dangerous. Hårstad (this volume) reports how a way of speaking which is termed "bad Norwegian" is used by young people to signal such streetwiseness, a "dangerous" identity. He characterizes the style as a new, urban way of speaking Norwegian and explains it as an outcome of recent "multi-linguality and -culturalism" in the environment where he has collected his data. Hårstad's observations are parallel to descriptions of relatively recently developed youth styles in many Eurpoean cities, for example Copenhagen (Quist 2000), Mannheim (Keim 2007), Utrecht (Nortier 2001), Århus (Christensen 2004), Hamburg (Dirim & Auer 2004), and London (Rampton 1995). Several of these studies explain the development of these styles with reference to multiethnicity. Sometimes the term *ethnolect* is used to label them. Jaspers (2007, 4f.) as well as Madsen (2008, 138) argue convincingly against associating these youth styles with ethnicity. Madsen (2008, 146) suggests the term *late modern urban youth* style. It is a condition of life in late modern urban environments that they are multilcultural and multiethnic. To consider ethnicity as the constituting category that can explain new styles is no more relevant than the developing plethora of available sexual orientations, and we might therefore just as well think of these styles as *sexolects*. The insight of Madsen, Jaspers, and others is that there is more at stake than classical sociological variables.

The negotiation of identities among young people is more than interaction to determine people's ethnicity, class, and gender. There are important category types which are not included in traditional sociolinguistic descriptions of language variation. The study of identity and language therefore has included concepts of categories based on local "particular environments" in Blommaert's sense. The perception of identity has changed "from relatively static models towards dynamic models" (Coupland 2007, 106). The fluid character of identities under negotiation force a dynamic perspective on the sociolinguistic study of language variation used in interaction among people – who are, by virtue of the sociolinguist's interest in the relationship between social phenomena and language variation, continuously involved in identity work.

A concept that captures the dynamics of identity negotiation is that of *style* and the accompanying terms styling, self-styling, and other-styling. In its broadest sense the term style "refers to a way of doing something" (Coupland 2007, 1), but its usefulness lies in the fact that things are done in ways that are different from other ways in which they could have been done. The streetwise style of speech which is sometimes used by Madsen's speakers while they are bragging about their grades in school, contrasts with other ways of speaking when one brags. It is a point, however, that specific styles of speech generally are stereotypically associated with particular groups of speakers, and with evaluations. Madsen's young male minority members are indeed generally associated with the streetwise speaking style - but this style is also stereotypically associated with negative school performance, opposition and anti-establishment behavior. Madsen demonstrates how the adolescent boys in her study are able to *both* express a very postive attitude to their schooling *and* use a style which is stereotypically associated with the opposite attitude. Style is a means to refer to stereotypical associations while not necessarily accepting those associations as given - the meaning of a particular style can be the subject of re-interpretation, the style may be re-evalued during interaction.

In addition to styling oneself as the adolescent boys in Madsen's study do, speakers are also able to other-style. Speakers refer to and negotiate values and associations of language to others.

> people use language and dialect in discursive practice to appropriate, explore, reproduce or challenge influential images and stereotypes of group thet thay *don't* themselves (straightfordly) belong to (Rampton 1999, 421)

By quoting others are referring to them using a specific linguistic style speakers may associate these others with the values that are stereotypically associated with the specific style. To give an example: J. S. Møller's studies of Turkish speakers in Denmark includes an incident (2008, 228f.) in which a speaker narrates an episode about a taxi trip in Bangkok using two styles of English. The speaker says: "I said Hotel Grace Place" with a clear and distinctly articulated pronunciation of "Hotel Grace Place" and continues, referring to the taxi driver: "the man said show me the way" with "show me the way" pronounced in stylized Asian English. The point of the story is that the taxi driver does not know one of the more glamorous hotels in Bangkok, and he is presented as

backward, primitive, ignorant. The choice of the style emphasizes this association.

The act of styling involves an act of *performance*. R. Bauman defines performance as a way of communicating a content in which the way it is communicated is as important as what is communicated (see also Coupland 2007, 146, see Rampton 2009 for a critique of the concept).

> Performance involves on the part of the performer an assumption of accountability to an audience for the way in which communication is carried out, above and beyond its referantial content. From the point of view of the audience, the act of expression on the part of the performer is thus marked as subject to evaluation for the way it is done, for the relative skill and effectiveness of the performer's display of competence (R. Bauman 1977, 11)

The success of the narrator who positions himself as the hero of the story about a problem with finding a hotel in Bangkok thus depends on his skills in referring to two kinds of English, and - which is just as important - to the audience recognizing the styles he uses to style himself and the taxi driver. In a sense the narrator exploits the generally held stereotypes associated with different kinds of English (as opposed to Madsen's adolescents who challenged them). There is a continuous mutuality between on the one hand using generally held evaluations to style and on the other hand developing new evaluations by oppositional styling.

Similarly, young people do not only categorize in categories which are local and situated. Rampton (2006) analyzes how adolescents in England refer to the category type of class. The different classes are associated with quite extensive and different value judgements which the adolescents exploit, as when they speak posh (or "self-styled posh") and Cockney. Identity negotiations do involve stereotypical categorizations which exploit associations brought into the context from a larger outside as well as the creative situated identities. The different ways this is done may often be described in terms of *frames* (Goffman 1974), i.e. organized understandings of specific sitiuated contexts. The frame of an ongoing interaction may change instantaneously based on the choice of a linguistic form. Madsen (this volume) describes how adolescents tease each other and can do so both in play frames and conflict frames. On the way they employ or refer to a range of shared understandings which enable them to get involved in the fine-grained interactions. Mortensen (this volume) analyzes the conversations among young people taking the first steps in

seduction. She also finds that there is a fine-grained balance between treating a momentary situation as play or as serious. The "seductive conversation" has three phases, and play frames are particularly important in phase two when the conversation has moved from initial non-committedness towards more involvement. In the third phase, proposals are aired, and this is where the conversations become risky and the balance important: speakers may move back and forth between phases two and three to achieve the balance. Granato & Parini (this volume) add to this the possibility of overcoming pain by setting the conversation in a humor-oriented frame. Their interactants co-operate to dramatize and thereby take the danger and pain out of a situation which is turned into a triviality instead. By such fine-tuning the young speakers can adjust their construction of the situation, the "atmosphere", and accordingly their social relaitons. Jørgensen & Martínez (this volume) analyzes the conversations of Spanish teenagers and concludes that a similar fine-tuning in the use of vocatives in phatic talk is handled with virtuosity by the young speakers in their negotiations of relations. On the other hand, negotiations about identities and social relations can also be rough - Rellstab (this volume) cites examples from chatroom conversations, including xenophobic and even racist utterances. He emphasizes that the chatroom as a medium allows for extreme statements because that risk of a face-loss is only relevant to the chat identity and not the face-to-face identity of the interlocutors.

The use of frame analysis shows us how the interlocutors work to establish the situations, the "particular environments" in which they interact. The situation in which interactions take place do influence the way speakers represent themselves. Sophocleous (this volume) compares language attitudes as they appear in relatively formal and relatively informal circumstances. An important observation is that his Greek Cypriot speakers prefer to interact about language attitudes in their (low-prestige) dialect in informal contexts, but reject the use of the same variety in the formal situation. The speakers are aware of this and explain it with the different evaluations which prevail in the different situations. In the official context years of teachers' corrections has installed a sense of insecurity on behalf of the dialect, but in the informal situation the dialect's association with warmth, solidarity, etc. is the stronger. Moulinou (this volume) examines the use of repetition as a way to establish shared understanding of a situation. In her analysis the participants demonstrate skillful administration of repetition to achieve conversational co-operation, but at the same time create "opposing identities". Moulinou carries out a

conversation analysis of data which from her side were intended to be playful, but which through the participation of the young participants became quite serious. Both Madsen, Mortensen, and Moulinou show how the young speakers may master the balancing act between playfulness and seriousness, and how they do so through skilled work with the framing of situations.

J. S. Møller (this volume) analyzes a restaurant conversation in which the interlocutors play with social categories and the stereotypes associated with them. They have difficulties attracting the attention of the waiter, and they alternatingly address him as "Hans", or "Abdullah", or "Chong li da Chong li cha", and so on - with names which are (used as) stereotypical representations for different national identities. The participants develop several similar plays with features which are stereotypically associated with specific groups. Møller refers to the linguistic behavior of his participants as *polylingual* behavior, a term also used by Højrup & J. Møller (this volume) as well as Lyberth & Jørgensen (this volume).

The term poly-lingual (Jørgensen forthcoming) covers the linguistic behavior which involves (and allows the involvement of) whatever features are available to the speakers, regardless of the features' (possible) association with different "languages". In this view, language is a natural human phenomenon, languages are not. Languages are socio-cultural constructions which do not represent the behavior of very many real-life speakers in late modern societies. For instance, Lyberth & Jørgensen show how young skaters in Nuuk use English features along with Danish features and Greenlandic features in their communication such as in the utterance "*taava tamarmik* tricks*it iluatsippai* **ud af fem**" [italicized types mark Greenlandic, rect English, and bold Danish - translation: *then he managed all the* tricks **out of five**].

Both Lyberth & Jørgensen and Højrup & J. Møller observe that poly-lingual languaging is frequent in graffiti as they appear in the streets of Nuuk and Copenhagen, erspectively. The poly-lingual juxtaposition of features which are socioculturally associated with "different languages" is used by graffiti writers to express attitudes in general, and perhaps opposition in particular. The Copenhagen graffiti analyzed by Højrup & J. Møller indicate that the writers belong to a group of oppositional young people connected to a cultural center in Copenhagen. On the other hand, such identity marking as appears in these graffiti is not unequivocal. The graffito *perkerz for 69* signals both opposition and ethnic minority identity

- besides being polylingual. Wieland (this volume) analyzes data from a Catalan environment and finds precisely a strong normativity which characterizes the language attitudes of gatekeepers and language institutions in Catalonia. This normativity, together with many decades of overt political repression of Catalan in Spain, works to stigmatize everything which violates the more or less official, very narrow norms of Catalonian. The young speakers do so, particularly by using Spanish features (and English features) together with Catalan - polylingual behavior signals oppositional attitudes.

Youth language is used to negotiate youth identities in many different ways, reaching from chatrooms (Rellstab, this volume) over graffiti (Lyberth & Jørgensen, this volume as well as Højrup & J. Møller, this volume) and restaurant conversations (J. S. Møller this volume) to seductions (Mortensen, this volume). This linguistic means that are employed by young speakers in late modern society are varied and include features (words, sounds, expressions, regularities) associated with many "different languages". Particularly in the late modern urban youth style do we see violations of monolingualism norms, norms of linguistic purity - as well as many other norms that are characteristic of officialdom, educational systems, newspaper editors and other kinds of gatekeepers. Nevertheless, the young speakers are demonstrably eloquent, able to maintain very finely tuned balancing acts, socially and linguistically, creative and varied in their language production. Youth language is in every sense as fit for advanced use as any kind of language, including identity work, facework, social negotiations, performance, etc., and youth language gives us examples of very advanced social skills.

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SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS, PLAY FRAMES, AND CONFLICT FRAMES IN INTERACTIONAL TEASING PRACTICES

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Teasing in interaction is an activity particularly sensitive to the joint construction of interpretive frames. Teasing is inherently ambiguous in that in involve potential co-present relevance of threats and playfulness. In this paper I focus on how interactional frames are jointly constructed in teasing sequences and how the negotiation of play frames and conflict frames influence and reflect the situational social relationships among the interlocutors. I employ a micro-ethnographic approach characteristic of interactional sociolinguistics. On the basis of sequential analysis of interactional data collected among youth in a martial arts club in Copenhagen, I discuss how teasing as playfully framed interactional activity is negotiated ongoingly in the conversation. The analyses suggest that frames are occasionally resisted, exploited, and transformed, and that sustaining a play frame in teasing depends highly on response work and shared understandings. The analysed examples also illustrate how several playful interactional activities can be combined and not easily separated in sequences of interaction were a play frame is established. Finally, the analyses show how the construction of interactional frames as such, and the simultaneous potential relevance of conflict and play, can be used as a means of negotiating social relationships.

Keywords: Interactional sociolinguistics, Youth language, Teasing, Interactional frames, Negotiation of social relationships.

Introduction

Compared to various other discourse types (e.g. types of adult professional discourse or educational adult-child interaction), children's and adolescents' discourse, and indeed casual, leisure peer-conversation, is characterised by being extensively playful. Lytra (2007) observed how the

linguistic practice among the children in the Greek primary school she
studied:

> (…) was saturated by the exchange of nicknames (…), playful and less
> playful jibes and solo singing that would tail off and re-emerge later in talk
> or turn into multi-voiced full-fledged singing performances. Children
> experimented with rhyme and rhythm, differences in intonation contours,
> pitch, volume and repetition. They referred, alluded to and performed
> recyclable and recontextualizable fragments of talk from music, TV and
> film as well as mimicked, reconstructed and parodied the voices of their
> peers and teachers (Lytra 2007:9).

Instances of playful talk frequently occurred across conversational contexts
in Lytra's data and her study on play frames and social identities
demonstrates how considering various playful linguistic practices is
crucial to understanding children's interactions. Lytra's description of her
data above could very well have been a description of the data I collected
in a leisure community of a martial arts club in Copenhagen. Teasing,
performances, play and experiments with pronunciation features,
incorporation of media discourse, and music making was evident in the
young martial arts practitioner's interactional behaviour. Interactional play
frames (including a variety of playful interactional activities, which I will
explain below) was the most salient characteristics of the interactions
among the youth. Yet, not all talk among the young members of the club
was merely playful. Playful interactional activities can be serious business
indeed. Negotiations of frames (as more of less playful), participation
status, and participant's alignments also resulted in conflicts, and relatively
overt serious conflicts occasionally occurred. Interactional conflicts,
whether subtle or overt, embedded within playful activities or not, are
highly significant to the study of the micro-management of social order
and local power negotiations among the participants (see also Goodwin
1990, 2006, and Madsen 2002). When employing a conception of
children's and adolescents' linguistic practice as extensively playful,
which is meaningful, it is worth discussing the relationship between non-
playful (serious) and playful. How are interactional frames jointly
negotiated? And how does this influence and reflect social relationships
among the participants? In this paper I will focus on this discussion by
considering examples involving the verbal activity of teasing.

Data and approach

The conversational extracts presented in this paper are part of the data I collected from 16 children and adolescents in a martial arts club in Copenhagen (see Madsen 2008), during ten months of fieldwork from August 2004 to June 2005. The youth in the sports club appeared to form five different friendship groups roughly corresponding to different age and gender categories. The data consist of field notes, largely unstructured qualitative interviews with the groups and individuals, video-recorded group-conversations, participants' self-recordings (only audio), and a few retrospective interviews about the self-recordings. The extracts analysed below are from group-conversations and self-recordings involving two groups of 11-15 year old girls and one group of 14-15 year old boys. The martial arts club is placed in a heterogeneous area of Copenhagen. The field of study forms a complex social space of Taekwondo traditions, Buddhist philosophy, and Danish leisure community culture combined with various cultural, social, linguistic, and educational backgrounds. Its members reflect the local population in the area, which is characterised by large multiethnic communities (often described by Danish media as immigrant ghettos), social problems, and at the same time a young student population.

The approach taken in my study is the one associated with the Hymes and Gumperz-inspired tradition of ethnographic and interactional sociolinguistics (by some referred to as pragmatic sociolinguistics, e.g. Maegaard 2007: 12). In particular recent work within this tradition, such as the work of researchers affiliated with the UK linguistic ethnography forum (e.g. Rampton 1995, 2006, Blommaert 2005, see also http://www.ling-ethnog.org.uk), represents a highly interdisciplinary approach. Conversation analysis is combined with ethnography, Goffman's micro-sociology, Bakhtinian concepts, aspects of critical discourse analysis (as in Blommaert 2005), and employment of a range of sociological and cultural theories. Along the same interdisciplinary lines, I take as the point of departure of my work ethnographic and linguistic micro-analyses of situated interactions among the young members of the Taekwondo club, and I relate the analyses of the situational pragmatic impact of linguistic acts and the local interactional negotiations of social meaning to broader processes of social indexicality, social stereotyping, and discursive formations (e.g. based on the theoretical accounts of Agha 2007, see Madsen 2008).

Interactional play frames and conflict frames: The case of teasing

In the interactions recorded among the children and adolescents in the martial arts club, teasing is a salient and frequent activity. The activity of teasing is especially sensitive to the joint construction of interpretation frames (as playful or serious) because it is ambiguous by the potential co-present relevance of challenges or (face) threats and playfulness simultaneously. The extracts I will present below, illustrate that the borders between serious conflict and playful teasing are fluid and negotiated ongoingly in the interaction (Lytra 2007 and Tholander & Aronsson 2002 also discuss how the construction of teasing as serious or playful depends on response work). But before discussing the extracts, I will briefly consider teasing in relation to the definitions of the concepts of frames, play frames, and conflict frames.

The general theoretical notion of *frame* is in Goffman's (1974: 10-11) understanding a way of conceptualising the local situational context of a social encounter. Social and verbal practices (or clusters of social and verbal acts) set up frames which inform the interpretation of what is going on in a given sequence of interaction. Participants in social interaction employ and interpret practices as contributions to or signals of certain types of activities, which are recognised exactly as types involving certain characteristics. Gumperz (1982) termed such acts or practices *contextualisation cues*. Contextualisation cues are signs which denote association with assumed background knowledge. In verbal interaction they might include features such as prosody, style and code switches, lexical and syntactic choices, formulaic expressions, and conversational strategies (Gumperz 1982: 131). Lytra's (2007) work on play frames in childrens' interactions builds on a combination of Goffman's concept of frame and Gumperz' notion of contextualisation cues. She emphasises that interactional frames are set up, constructed, and developed dynamically in interactions. Participants might tune into a given frame, but they might also challenge or transform the frame, and more than one frame can be relevant to a sequence of interaction at the same time (Lytra 2007: 19-20). Lytra further describes a number of contextualisation cues used by the children in her study to mark off periods of talk as play. These include:

(1) nickames; (2) mock challenges, threats, commands and insults; (3) prosody (shifts in volume, pitch, rhyme and rhythm, sing-song intonation, overdone or exaggerated speech), laughter, giggling, clapping; (4) snippets

of songs; (5) repetition; (6) code and style switches; (7) formulaic expressions and other recyclable fragments of talk (one-liners, punch lines, chants, catchy phrases); (8) terms of verbal abuse; (9) mock acts of aggression (hair pulling, nape slapping, pushing) and (10) untranslatable particles ("re", "vre") (Lytra 2007: 109).

It should be noted that this list of features was the result of micro-analysis of the features in co-occurrence in particular conversational surroundings in Lytra's data set. The features as such should not be understood as inherently signalling play in all contexts. Lytra (2007) employs *play frames* as a cover term for a range of verbal activities namely music making and chanting, verbal play, joking, and teasing. Music making and chanting refer in Lytra's use to the children's employments of singing and humming of shared popular tunes (music making) or recyclable fragments of talk (chanting) drawn primarily from out-of-school media practices including both solo routines and multi-voiced performances (Lytra 2007: 106-8). Verbal play refers to various forms of manipulation of linguistic elements to create comic effect. Both teasing and joking in Lytra's definition involve threats, challenges, or insults designed as humorous rather than sincere. Lytra separates joking from teasing mainly based on the target of the activity. Teases are always targeted at a present party, while jokes according to her definition might be aimed at an absent third-party, an object, a situation, or the speaker herself (Lytra 2007: 100-103). Tholander and Aronsson (2002: 563) define teasing in conversation in a similar manner, namely as interactional practices which point out or hint at co-participants' shortcomings, norm transgressions, or inappropriate behaviour and are directed at a present party. While teasing activities in Lytra's study are encompassed in the larger category of play frames (in opposition to non-play frames), teasing is in Kotthoff (2007) treated as one of several oral genres of humour. According to Kotthoff, teasing can be described as a: '*Personally addressed jocular remark with a bite, often performed in front of a public*' (Kotthoff 2007: 271). Kotthoff further views teasing as '*situated practice resting on inference based interpretations*' (Kotthoff 2006: 6).

In my approach, I do not consider teasing a distinct and clearly defined speech activity, teasing is realised in conversation in various ways. The significant criterion of teasing in my work is that it involves some aspect of playful keying (Goffman 1974: 45) at the same time as involving some aspects of attack, opposition, or emphasis on shortcomings of present participants. Teasing might be instigated or responded to more or less playfully or more or less seriously (Drew 1987, Boxter & Cortés-Conde

1997, Tholander & Aronsson 2002). My purpose is not to differentiate types of teasing from other playful interactional activities. I include, as we shall see in the examples, teasing involved in ritualised insulting practices (Labov 1972, Eder 1991, Goodwin 1990), teasing embedded within humorous stories, music making, or other playful genres (see for instance Lytra 2007 and Kotthoff 2007). In fact, it is salient in my data that different playful conversational activities are often combined and intertwined.

Interactional sociolinguistic studies of peer-group teasing have focused on negotiation of social identities, social alliances, and teasing as socialising practices (e.g. Lytra 2007, Tholander 2002, Eder 1991, Goodwin 1990). In group-interactions teasing has been described as engaging multiparty participation (Lytra 2007). Teasing is viewed as requiring some level of intimacy among the participants (Eisenberg 1986, Norrick 1993, Eder 1991, Lytra 2007) and sharing a playful activity might therefore work as an in-group marker. Through eliciting the support of their peers, participants in teasing practices has been shown to negotiate social alliances and local power relationships, and teasing have been demonstrated a means of competing for group leaderships (Tholander & Aronsson 2002, Lytra 2007, Goodwin 1990, 2006). A focus of the research on teasing has been how it involves attributed social roles to selves and others. Through teasing, participants reinforce and monitor social conduct and talk of their peers (Lytra 2007). Finally, it has been emphasised that teasing requires skilled performances and depends on shared understandings (Eder 1991, Boxter & Cortés-Conde 1997, Kotthoff 2006).

In many ways the characteristics of an interactional conflict resembles those of teasing. The main difference is the cues involved in the initiation as well as the response signalling play or non-play. According to Gumperz (1982: 166) verbal conflicts are recognised as a distinctive speech activity. Vuchinich (1990) describes verbal conflicts as turns of talk or actions directly or indirectly expressing opposition:

> In verbal conflict, participants oppose the utterances, actions, or selves of one another in successive turns of talk. Linguistic, paralinguistic, or kinesic devices can be used to express opposition directly or indirectly. Verbal conflict ends when the oppositional turns cease and other activities are taken up (Vuchinich 1990: 118).

The opposition involved in verbal conflicts can be related to particular utterances or more generally to other participants' post, present, or future actions made relevant during a sequence of conversation. Opposition can also be displayed and directed at interlocutors' 'selves' without referring to particular utterances or actions. An example of this could be derogative expressions or insults (e.g. extract 1 'it's your arse'). Displays of opposition are what Goodwin (2006) refers to as polarity markers. Conflicts thus involve lack of consensus, but because conflicts can be recognized and engaged in as a speech activity, this does not necessarily result in conversational break-downs. As Vuchinich further ads: '*The agreement on the speech activity makes it possible to continue interaction while lack of consensus on other matters is addressed*' (Vuchinich 1990: 119). A conflict, however, as we shall see in extract 20 below, can also be related to opposing orientation to the speech activity and the interactional frame as such. In interactional conflicts social relationships and participants' face (Goffman 1967) are always at stake (Madsen 2002: 28 & 71, see also Goodwin 2006). The outcome of conflicts varies from resolutions, over subtle shifts of speech activity, to overt hostility, physical violence, and withdrawal from interaction. In Madsen (2002) I found that some form of resolution or shift of speech activity was the most frequent outcome of the children's conversational conflicts. I also found that conflicts could be considered local power struggles and that in most cases winners and losers could be identified (Madsen 2002: 71-72). When observable interactional actions involve oppositional stances, attitudes, or evaluations, they index an interactional conflict frame. Conflict frames might be accompanied by contextualization cues indexing play, and the speech activity can then be described as a jocular conflict or as teasing. Teasing simultaneously invokes conflict frames and play frames. This ambiguity is dealt with in diverse ways in interactions. To illustrate some of the ways in which the participants in my study went about constructing teasing sequences, I will now discuss three different examples of interactional teasing in my data.

Jocular self-ridicule

Extract 1 is a sequence from a group-conversation between three 15 year old girls: Ling, Misha, and Malena. The girls are engaged in the task of gluing pictures on a poster. Ling is standing near a table cutting out pictures from magazines, while Misha and Malena are sat at the table gluing on pictures. The task-frame, though, does not appear relevant to this particular sequence.

Extract 1: Bananas in pyjamas
(33 minutes into group-conversation)

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1 Mis: hvad var det du sagde i går nej øh g et g to g tre for
2      første anden og tredje g'er
       ((points to Ling and then to Malena))
   Eng: what was it you said yesterday no eh g one g to g three
        for first second and third g's
3 Mal: °hvad° ((they all laugh))
   Eng: °what°
4 Mis: hhh hhh >hun stod bare< hhh hhh vi sad og snakkede om
5      gymasiet ikke så kommer det        [sådan der]
   Eng: hhh hhh >she just stood< hhh hhh we sat and talked
        about high school right then it comes [like]
6 Mal:                                       [første g]
   Eng:                                       [first g]
7 Mis: nej nej øh nej ((light switches off in the room))
   Eng: no no eh no
8 Lin: aih aih ↑ai:h
9 Mis: scream ((deep voice, the light switches back on))(0.8)
10     >så siger hun sådan< nå men hvad så med det der g et
11     og g to og g tre (.) ↑hvad hhh hhh det hedder første
12     anden og tredje g (.)↑nå↓å: hhh hhh
   Eng: >then she says like< well but what about that g one and
        g two and g three (.)↑what hhh hhh it's called first
        second and third g (.)↑o↓o:h hhh hhh
13 Lin: nej så sir jeg nej nej nej det hedder den der
14     gymnasium et to og tre
   Eng: not hen I say no no no it's called that high school
        One two and three
15 Mis: hhh hhh g hvad?
   Eng: hhh hhh g what?
16 Lin: me:n det var stadig forkert
   Eng: bu:t it was still wrong
17 Mis: du ved ligesom i en børnehave og så begyndte hun at
18     sidde og forklare noget om børnehaveklasse og niende
19     klasse så sad jeg der hvad ja du ved g et g to ↑hvad
20     hhh hhh
   Eng: you know like in a nursery and then she began to sit
        and explain something about nursery class and ninth
        grade so I sat there what yes you know g one g two
        ↑what hhh hhh
21 Lin: hhh hhh ha ha
22 Min: så sagde jeg det er ikke bananas det er ikke bananas i
23     pyjamas det her.
   Eng: then I said it's not bananas it's not Bananas in
        Pyjamas this
24 Lin: b et b to hhh hhh
   Eng: b one b two hhh hhh
25 Mis: b et og b to hhh hhh
   Eng: be one and b two hhh hhh
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