

Sample analysis

Data

1 Ben The other thing that we noticed ((voice drops in volume))
2 you know, we didn't see any Jews, - you know in Las Vegas,
3 you know how you see those greasy old [women an' men
4 Ann [well
5 Ben And VErY few Negroes. ((voice moves to low-normal))
6 But we saw LOTS of Orientals.
7 Ann [Mm hm,
8 Ben [You see, I think they come in from San Francisco.
9 Ann Mm hm,
10 Ben And they're treMENdous GAMblers.
11 Ann (0.8)
12 Ben They REally are
13 Ann (2.10)
14 Ben It's something to see, and [I am glad I saw it
15 Ann [how do you
16 How do you know that? Did you go there yourself hhhaa

Critical Analysis

This excerpt illustrates the (co-)construction of othering discourse and its final re-orientation in response to the interlocutor's signals of disagreement (Condor et al., 2006; Dervin, 2016). The phenomenon unfolds in multiple turns. Ben (lines 1-8) constructs a strong othering speech against three ethnic/racial groups. He uses linguistic (demonstratives, derogatory lexicon, syntax) and paralinguistic (volume) signs of prejudice to categorize, assess, and discriminate Jews, Orientals, and black people. In line 1, Ben's voice low volume hints awareness that what he is about to say may be socially inappropriate. In the utterance "*those greasy old women and men*" (line 3), the demonstrative "those" and the negative assessment "greasy" position him in a separate category from the unpleasantly polite out-group of Jews (Condor et al., 2006). Later, his use of the socially unacceptable term "Negroes" (line 5) instead of the neutral "black" further constructs his prejudice attitude (Dervin, 2016).

Interestingly, racialization tends to occur through blended discourses, so it is inappropriate to assume that Ben's out-grouping is merely ethnic (Dervin, 2016). In fact, by stating that the Orientals "*come in from San Francisco*" (one of the most expensive cities in America), Ben ascribes to them the identity of "rich". This turn draws attention to a simultaneous grouping constructed syntactically through the comparison of stereotypically wealthier and poorer communities. The coordinating conjunction "and" (line 6) puts Negroes

Jews together while the conjunction “but” separates the affluent Orientals from them. Thus, othering here is also about economic power. The last relevant feature is Ben’s utterance “*you know*” (lines 2 and 3) which he uses to prompt Ann’s agreement possibly as an in-group member (Pomerantz, 1984).

Nonetheless, his discriminatory assessments encourage Ann to select a dispreferred action of delayed disagreement that unfolds through a series of devices across multiple turns (Pomerantz, 1984). In line 4, Ann utters the prefacing disagreement marker “*well*” orienting in the opposite direction and delaying her criticism (Pomerantz, 1984). In line 7, she utters the continuation token “*Mm hm*” which not only decreases conflict but also signals preparation for speaking (Petraki, 2005). Both devices overlap with Ben’s ongoing description, evidencing Ann’s urgency to express disagreement, but also active listening (Pomerantz, 1984). The accountable matter resulting from Ben’s discriminatory speech encourages Ann to initiate a repair through token “*Mm hm*” in line 9 (Condor et al., 2006). However, Ben’s reply in line 10 (“*they’re tremendous gambles*”) creates a further accountable. Ann responds to the ambiguity of the word “tremendous” as either “extremely good” or “excessive in the amounts” with two pauses in lines 11 (0.8) and 13 (2.10). These delays allow Ben to foresee Ann’s potential criticism and resume the talk re-orienting his discriminatory speech (Pomerantz, 1984).

In line 14, Ben assesses the experience as “*something to see*”, which may lessen his previous prejudiced attitude (Pomerantz, 1984; Dervin, 2016). Finally, Ann uses the wh-question “*how do you know that?*” (line 15-16) as a disagreement device to elicit repair-work (Petraki, 2005). This gives Ben the opportunity to defend his position rationally (Condor et al., 2006). Ann’s question overlaps with Ben’s final repair (“*I am glad I saw it*”) which may represent Ben’s attempt to dodge his identity of prejudice and protect his own personal face (Condor et al., 2006).

Word count: 535 /500

References:

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