Studying interaction in order to cultivate communicative practices

Action-implicative discourse analysis

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Our purpose in analyzing the talk and texts that comprise social scenes is to develop grounded practical theories of communication; the method for doing this we have labeled Action-Implicative Discourse Analysis (AIDA). The goal in developing a grounded practical theory is threefold: (1) to construct the dilemmas and interactional challenges of a practice, (2) to identify the interactional moves that reflect the practice's problems and the discursive strategies selected to manage them, and (3) to reconstruct the situated ideals that animate participants' actions and critique of their own and others' actions. We argue that to understand the distinctive character of these three approaches requires recognizing each approach's orientation to the context of a particular academic discipline. These disciplinary contexts have shaped what each approach takes for granted or treats as contested. That CA originated in sociology, IS in linguistics, and AIDA in communication is crucial to understanding why each approach poses the questions about interaction that it does.

Interview Comments:

(1) John Gumperz, Interactional Sociolinguistics
     As to "regularities" of communicative practice, I believe that these should ultimately be derived from or related to in-depth analyses of situated encounters in a variety of settings (Prevignano and Thibault 2003a: 151).
(2) Emanuel Schegloff, Conversation Analysis
     If one is committed to understanding actual actions (by which I mean ones which actually occurred in real time), it is virtually impossible to detach them from their context for isolated analysis with a straight face (Cmejrkova and Prevignano 2003: 39).

We begin this chapter by echoing words that Schegloff and Gumperz uttered in recent interviews in which each was questioned about his approach to studying interaction. Conversation analysis (CA) and interactional sociolinguistics (IS) differ from each other in many significant ways, as does action implicative discourse analysis (AIDA), our own approach. As a starting point, however, all three approaches hold this in common: to understand social action, interaction, or communicative practices–whatever this stuff is to be called–requires looking at it in the context in which it occurred.

Our chapter is divided into two sections. In the first section we overview AIDA, providing an example to show how we analyze interaction; for the example we draw upon some recent work studying community-level school board meetings. The second section of the chapter considers the questions about interaction posed by the editors, giving focal attention to the similarities and differences of AIDA with both CA and IS. We argue that to understand the distinctive character of these three approaches requires recognizing each approach's orientation to the context of a particular academic discipline. These disciplinary contexts have shaped what each approach takes for granted or treats as contested about language and social life. That CA originated in sociology, IS in linguistics, and AIDA in communication is crucial to understanding why each approach poses the questions about interaction that it does.

1.   Action-implicative discourse analysis

AIDA is centrally interested in describing the problems, interactional strategies, and ideals-in-use within existing communicative practices. It is an approach that melds the analytic moves of discourse analysis–attending to situated talk and texts–with the goal of developing an understanding that will be action-implicative for practical life. AIDA works to provide a reconstructed account of the communicative problems, interaction strategies, and normative ideals of a practice so that participants will be able to reflect in more sophisticated ways about how to act. AIDA takes a rhetorical point of view, presuming that people can make more or less reflective decisions about how to communicate in order to act well and achieve or avoid certain outcomes. It is a normative approach: potential usefulness for being able to think and act wisely is a key criterion for assessing the contribution of particular studies. In what follows, we describe intellectual traditions that shaped AIDA and say a bit about its focal unit and aims, methodological profile, and rhetorical-normative stance. A more elaborated description of AIDA can be found in Tracy (2005).

1.1 AIDA's intellectual heritage

AIDA is best described as the coming together of two traditions: practical theory, an approach developed in the field of communication, and discourse analysis as it is practiced in the multidisciplinary community. Consider each tradition.

Craig (1989, 1992, 1993, 1995a, 1995b, 1996a, 1996b; Craig and Tracy, 1995) has argued that communication studies should be conceived as a practical discipline rather than an empirical science. Rather than assuming that the ultimate goal of inquiry should be to produce descriptions and theoretical explanations of empirical phenomena, as is the case when a discipline is conceived as a science, a practical discipline takes its ultimate goal to be the cultivation of practice. This difference in goals has implications for the role of theory, because the cultivation of practice requires attention to normative as well as empirical questions. Whereas explanatory scientific theory lends itself to the cultivation of an instrumental (means-ends) orientation to practice, practical normative theory is "centrally concerned with what ought to be; it seeks to articulate normative ideals by which to guide the conduct and criticism of practice" (Craig and Tracy 1995: 249). How exactly to integrate the technical-productive (techne) side of communication with its moral-political (praxis) aspects is a major challenge for communication studies conceived as a practical discipline.

Practical theory seeks to *reconstruct* communicative practices and provides methodological guidance for doing so (Craig and Tracy 1995). To reconstruct a practice means to conceptualize an idealized, normative model that is grounded in close observation as well as critical reflection. Researchers can reconstruct communicative practices at three levels. First and most crucial is the problem level: identifying the problems that occur for different categories of participants in particular social practices. Second, reconstruction can describe the specific conversational techniques and strategies that are employed to manage focal problems (the technical level). Finally, reconstruction can formulate the abstract ideals and principles that account for the selection of techniques for addressing particular kinds of problems (the philosophical level). Of note, the philosophical level must be grounded in situated ideals, the beliefs about good conduct that can be inferred from patterns of praise and blame made by participants in actual situations of practice.

AIDA adopts the goals of practical theory and pursues them through the method of discourse analysis. Discourse is a term that gets used in quite different ways (e.g., Cameron 2001; van Dijk 1997a, 1997b). Our usage is similar to that found in linguistics (e.g., Schiffrin 1994), where "discourse" is paired with the term, "analysis" and treated as an umbrella term to refer to a variety of approaches to the study of talk or text. At its simplest, discourse analysis involves careful study of recorded and transcribed talk or text, where excerpts are used to make scholarly

arguments. A second and different meaning of the term "discourse" is informed by the work of Michél Foucault (1972)—what Gee (1999) refers to as big-D discourse in contrast with little-d discourse. Big-D discourse, usually mentioned in the plural (discourses), refers to complex social practices such as education or business. Some forms of discourse analysis, for example critical discourse approaches (Fairclough 2001), are interested in both big-D and little-d discourse, but many discourse analysts are not. For this reason it is important to keep the two meanings distinct.

As an approach that analyzes interaction, AIDA has been influenced by CA, anthropologically-influenced speech act traditions, discursive psychology, and critical discourse analysis (CDA). From CA, AIDA takes the commitment to study everyday interaction and the practice of repeatedly listening to exchanges that researchers have transcribed while attending to many particulars, including intonation, abrupt word or phrase cut-offs, and repetition and vocalized sounds (uh, um, eh). Moreover, although not accepting the CA principle that an interpretation should only use what is visibly displayed in a next turn at talk (Schegloff 1992, 1998), AIDA does share the CA view that how an interactional partner responds is an important resource for anchoring proposals about participant meaning. From anthropologically-influenced speech act traditions (Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper 1989; Brown and Levinson 1987; Gumperz 1982b), AIDA assumes the importance of seeing assessments about conversational actions as culturally-inflected judgments. Discursive psychology contributes to AIDA through its notion of dilemma (Billig et al. 1988) and in its development of a rhetorical stance toward discourse. Finally, critical discourse approaches argue that small-d discourse should be connected with big-D discourses (Fairclough and Wodak 1997). As AIDA is committed to cultivating the communicative practices that are studied, CDA offers one model of how that linkage might be made. But, let us consider what AIDA studies of interaction look like in their own terms.

1.2   Distinctive features of AIDA

AIDA focuses on communicative practices in institutional sites, with an analytic aim of reconstructing the web of actor problems, conversational moves and strategies, and situated ideals involved in those practices. An obvious question becomes, then, what is a *communicative practice*? Practice as a term has some useful ambiguities; at its core, though, it can be thought of as a way of referring to activities that occur in specific places among specific kinds of people; practice is another way to refer to a speech event (Hymes 1974) or what participants take to be a situation's frame (Goffman 1974; Tannen 1993). Ordinary names given to practices often call up a constellation of site-people-purposes connections. "School board meetings," "departmental colloquia," and "classroom discussions" are examples of easily

recognized practices related to educational settings. Practice is a way of unitizing the social world to enable analysis. Since institutional practices involve multiple categories of people who are positioned differently within the practice, the problems of a practice will differ with a participant's position. Getting a handle on the interactional problems from the points of view of the main categories of participants is one aim of AIDA, although often this aim is pursued across multiple studies.

Having identified an important communication practice, a next question becomes how to study it. AIDA is a type of discourse analysis that is also ethnographic. To reconstruct a communication practice well demands that a researcher have extensive knowledge about the routine actions and variation in the practice. This requires the analyst to do sustained observation of the practice. It also requires analysts to develop an understanding of both how participants talk with each other in the practice (the focal discourse) and how they talk about their practice (meta-discourse). What exactly will be the necessary ethnographic components will depend on the practice being studied.

In the analysis of school board meetings, soon to be illustrated, the focal discourse data were 250 hours of one community's school board meetings recorded from a local cable broadcast and collected over a several-year time span. In addition to the focal discourse, only a small proportion of which is to be transcribed, are the following kinds of data: notes taken from viewing the televised meetings; several observations of the meetings on site; agenda, minutes, and other documents related to particular policy discussions; local newspaper articles and editorials about Board activities; and interviews with a variety of participants. Moreover, since all of these materials come from one community, the final activity involved observing meetings in other communities. Thus, a first step in AIDA is to develop extended knowledge of a focal practice. This is accomplished by taping (or getting access to tapes of) a good number of hours of the central discourse activity, and by building up a portrait of the scene, the people, and the practice drawing on whatever additional materials are relevant and accessible.

A next step for AIDA is to identify the segments of a focal practice for transcription and analysis. At the selection and transcription stage, AIDA differs from CA in two ways. First, AIDA would never begin with discourse moments that before analysis, as Harvey Sacks would advocate, seem to be "utterly uninteresting data" (1992: 293). While there is no dispute that such analyses can be valuable, for AIDA, not all moments of interaction are equally promising places to start. In AIDA, selecting stretches of discourse to be transcribed is a theoretically shaped activity. Since one goal is to understand the problems of a practice, moments in which participants seem to be experiencing discomfort, tension, or conflict are especially promising targets to focus on. Since another goal is to understand the situated ideals of a practice, instances where participants express evaluation of

other people's actions are a second type of talk likely to be selected. Finally, segments of interaction that seem at odds with how an institution describes its aims and practices are also potentially of interest.

Second, AIDA studies typically work with relatively long segments of interaction and give limited attention to timing and prosody. The reason for this choice flows from the AIDA commitment to develop ideas that contribute to participants' reflection about a practice. For this reason, AIDA gives primary attention to the aspects of communication about which people are most able to reflect: choices about wording, speech acts, arguments, and speech or story organizations.

In its normative orientation and its interest in both big-D and little-d discourse, AIDA resembles CDA. The normative principle that guides AIDA differs, however, from that of CDA. Whereas CDA is centrally committed to a negative critique that exposes invisible practices of power and domination rooted in macrosocial inequities, AIDA is centrally committed to addressing normative problems that arise within particular, situated social practices. AIDA, unlike CDA, aims toward a positive reconstruction that conceptualizes how particular communicative practices should be conducted. From an AIDA point of view, power and status differences are an unavoidable, and often desirable, aspect of institutional life. Practices cannot be judged without attending closely to their particular contexts. AIDA draws upon the Aristotelian idea of phronesis — good judgment, prudence, practical wisdom, sound and thoughtful deliberation, reasonableness — as a basis for the critique of practices. Phronesis is "not a simple process of applying principles or rules to cases that leaves the principles or rules unchanged; in prudential practice, there is a negotiation between the case and the principle that allows both to gain in clarity" (Jasinski, 2001: 463).

Within AIDA, the central starting point for development of normative proposals is to identify the practice's situated ideal(s). Situated ideals are participants' beliefs about good conduct that can be reconstructed from discursive moments in which they praise and criticize. Situated ideals capture the complex prioritizing of competing concerns and values that not only will, but also arguably should, be operative in actual practices. Situated ideals may be reconstructed from analysis of participant interviews (Tracy 1997) or from study of interactive moments in conjunction with institutional documents or other segments of interaction (e.g., Agne 2003). In the school board meeting project, the school district was developing its policy position toward students and staff who were gay (Tracy and Ashcraft 2001). In this deliberative body, the group's espoused principle of communicative conduct was to "avoid arguing over words." Yet, in reflective moments and in its actual practices, participants treated word arguments positively, framing them as serving valuable functions. Arguments over document language were used to manage a dilemma. To make a decision, the group sought to advance the value to

which the majority of the group was committed–in this case, advocating acceptance of gays. At the same time, the group majority wanted to maintain good relations with group members committed to a contrary value. Because the school board wanted to avoid being dismissive and sought to show that it was treating all views seriously, it needed to spend a significant amount of time talking about the wording options rather than moving ahead merely because they had the needed number of votes. Arguing over words was how the group attended to these competing commitments.

1.3   AIDA example: School board meetings

To illustrate how AIDA analyzes interaction, we focus on one exchange that occurred at a school board meeting. As background, it is important to note that, in the United States, local governance committees, commonly referred to as school boards, are influential in shaping educational policy. These boards, usually ranging between 5 and 11 members, are elected by their local communities and make a host of decisions about policies, resource allocation, and to a certain degree, curriculum. Of all the decisions that school boards make, none is quite as important as the task of selecting the person to fill the role of superintendent. It is the district superintendent who interprets and implements the board's policies and directs the day-to-day operation of the school district; this person is enormously influential.

A school board meeting typically involves the elected officials, the superintendent and selected school staff, and varying numbers of citizens from the community. Meetings are public, often broadcast over community-sponsored radio or television stations, and include times for citizen commentary and for discussion among the board members about issues on which they will soon be voting. Among some boards there is little disagreement and almost all votes are unanimous (Newman and Brown 1992). At other times, though, boards become sites for the playing out of serious disagreements that exist in the community. The exchange that is analyzed below comes from a board meeting in which there was a history of votes routinely splitting into majority and minority positions.

The exchange occurred among one of the board members who took the minority position and was usually outvoted (Shoemaker), two of the board officers who were part of the majority coalition, (Hult and Shonkwiler) and a consultant (Ceruli) who had been hired to assist with the district's search for the next superintendent. On the meeting's agenda, the item of discussion was described as "Approval and Acceptance of the Superintendent Search Committee."[1]

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1.   This analysis is a shortened version of one that appears in more detail, with more specifics of the school board meetings and other segments of meeting interaction in Tracy and Standerfer (2003).

Meeting Excerpt: Minority Member Shoemaker's No Vote
(H=Hult, the president; Sh=Shoemaker, board member in minority position;
S=Shonkwiler, the vice president; C=Ceruli, paid consultant to the Board)

 1 H: Linda
 2 Sh: I have some questions, um. I guess clarification first. I assume that
 3   these names are added to, um (.) what we are going to be voting on
 4   here. We're voting on the process, the budget, and these names, is
 5   that correct?
 6 H: We're voting on the process and the budget. Search process and budget.
 7 Sh: Will we=
 8 H: = I guess the names are an inherent uh element of that (.)
 9 Sh: So we are voting on the names or-
10 H: It's the whole thing we are voting on
11 Sh: not
12 H: Yeah.
13 Sh: Okay. So we -are voting on the names
14 H: Yeah. Yeah. I think so (pause) in effect. I mean there's no separate
15   category for it but
16 S: It's part, it's part of the whole package
17 Sh: Well it just
18 H: Part of the whole thing
19 S: Part part of the package
20 Sh: It seems to me that if we <u>vote</u> on the members of DAC [District
21   Advisory Council] and we <u>vote</u> on the members of our real estate
22   task force, we <u>certainly</u> should be <u>voting</u> on our superintendent
23   search committee.
24 H: Wanna do it <u>name</u> by <u>name</u> or d'you wanna do it as a lump sum?
25   Lump group.
26 Sh: Lump sum is fine.
27 H: Okay.
28 S: hh Move that we appoint the listed members to the task force that
29   was approved by the board at the last meeting.
30 H: I just h- guess that would be just a friendly amendment (.) to the
31   motion.
32 S: I stand corrected. That would be an amendment to the motion.
33 H: ºOkayº Great.
34 Sh: ºOkayº Now. Some questions for Mr. Ceruli, please? Um. how many
35   <u>searches</u> for superintendents have you conducted in the past?
36 C: Uh, w-

37   Sh: Approximately
38   C: Our firm is a, ah research and facilitation firm. So we have not
39   conducted a ah superintendent search. We've b- been in involved
40   with um um one particular search in Denver. uh, But what we do are
41   <u>public process</u> and research and so what were, ah what we've offered
42   to do here and what we've done thus far is um put together the parts
43   of the public process that would uh uh accompany this um and <u>all </u>of
44   the <u>research</u> and that it wh- th- it which essentially a search is. It is
45   a- it's an effort to um a- acquire the information you need from these
46   individuals and so that's what we would conduct.
47   Sh: So the answer is that you <u>haven't</u>. ((laughs))
48   ((Audience laughter))
49   C: We, uh. That's right. That is the answer.
50   Sh: Is that correct? ((laugh))
51   C: That is the answer. Correct.
52   Sh: That you have not uh <u>supervised</u> or <u>organized</u> or whatever you are
53   <u>doing</u> for us a superintendent's
54   C: Right.
55   Sh: search committee <u>ever</u> before.
56   C: Uh we've conducted searches for the um the scientific and cultural
57   facilities district uh executive director that's been with them for eight
58   years. We uh assisted on the conducting of the Great Outdoor
59   Colorado search for their executive director, so we have done
60   executive director searches before. We haven't done a search for a
61   superintendent specifically.
62   Sh: Uh-huh, I just wanted to clarify that. Um, I guess am going to have
63   to vote against this

For analytic purposes, we will divide the exchange into two sections: lines 1–28 and 29–55. If we were to interpret Shoemaker's actions through the focal decision — approval of the search process — we would likely "see" evidence of hidden agendas and the irrationality of much of the talk that goes on in decision-making groups. However, if we assume that people and their talk are reasonable, attending to legitimate problems, then what becomes visible?

In lines 1–28, Shoemaker questions the meaning of voting to approve the superintendent search procedures. Although the most straightforward function of questions is to seek information, questions frequently challenge and criticize (Tracy 1997). In lines 2–5, where Shoemaker questions whether committee members' names are to be included in the vote, it seems possible that she is merely seeking information. However, when she twice repeats the upshot of Hult's answer

("so we're voting on the names," lines 8 and 12) and then explicitly states why she regards it as unreasonable to not specify the committee make-up, it becomes clear that the "question" is a challenge. Hult's response (line 21), in fact, acknowledges Shoemaker's criticism and offers a solution. Yet the choice she offers Shoemaker — "name by name or lump group"—frames Shoemaker as unreasonable. In light of the shared view that school board meetings were already too long, a proposal to turn the approval process into a yes-no vote on 11 citizens, as well as all the other pieces of the process, implicated Shoemaker negatively. Stated differently, Hult's comment humors and therein seeks to silence a difficult member. This humoring is underscored by Shonkwiler's proposal (lines 24–25) when he states, "Move that we appoint the listed members to the task force *that was approved by the Board at the last meeting*." In essence, the President's and Vice President's comments frame Shoemaker as haggling over something that has already been decided, and there-fore implicitly wasting time and being unreasonable.

Shoemaker's response, "lump sum is fine" (line 22), is interesting because it is at odds with an implication established through her prior questioning — that there was something troubling about the search committee's make-up. Allowing approv-al of the committee to be bundled into the "search process" decision would seem to be just the issue to which Shoemaker had earlier been objecting. Yet, at this junc-ture in the meeting, she pursues the issue no further, shifting attention to other concerns. How, then, might it be possible to see Shoemaker's talk as reasonable?

Models of group interaction often assert competing notions of good member behavior. On the one hand, members are encouraged to be vigilant and not to go along with the majority to avoid conflict (Janis and Mann 1977). On the other, they are expected to avoid actions that contribute to the negative reputation that meetings have come to have in Western society: as ineffectual, a waste of time, te-dious, and so forth (Schwartzman 1989). In groups that use majority rule rather than consensus, problematizing the direction the group is going, but then permit-ting the group to continue, is a reasonable strategy for a person whose position is in the minority. Such a move allows the member to establish his or her reserva-tions and yet to avoid being cast as the group "problem."

In the second half of the exchange, Shoemaker challenges consultant Ceruli's competence to be organizing the superintendent search process. In asking Ceruli how many superintendent searches he had previously conducted (lines 29–30), and then tacking on that it would be acceptable for Ceruli to offer an approximate number (line 32), Shoemaker implies the reasonableness of expecting Ceruli's firm to have done a number of searches. In adding "approximately" to her initial ques-tion formulation, Shoemaker's question offers a "candidate answer" (Pomerantz 1988). Approximation of a number makes sense if one is dealing with relatively large numbers, at least, say, 10 or 15. But, if it is expected that a person has done only

one or two searches, there is no need to ask for an approximate number. This is even more the case if a questioner expects that a firm may have done no searches.

Ceruli's nonfluent and rambling answer makes visible his awareness of the implications of this question as well his own discomfort with those implications. Although Ceruli tries to reframe the experience he does have, Shoemaker does not accept his reframing. In summarizing the gist of Ceruli's comment (line 41) as "the answer is you <u>haven't</u> [any experience]" she offers an unfriendly reading. Not only does Shoemaker respond unsympathetically, but she also underscores it with her follow-up questions and, thereby, forces Ceruli to acknowledge publicly and repeatedly that he has no experience conducting a superintendent search. From Ceruli's point of view, it is hard to imagine that he did not see Shoemaker as deliberately working to undermine him in a situation where the group (i.e., the board majority) had already hired him.

If we raise the question concerning what purpose Shoemaker's talk serves, a function does become apparent. Shoemaker's interrogation draws attention to the fact that some persons, but not she, hired a consulting firm with questionable competence. Furthermore, her pursuit of this issue strongly implies that she was not part of that decision; either the decision occurred behind her back (because the majority favored it and there was no need to get her input), or it was made despite concerns she may have raised. Shoemaker's comments, thus, construct a version of recent events that make visible for citizens in the community (i.e., voters in the upcoming election) that the board majority led by the president acted in a high-handed and/or questionable manner.

Shoemaker went on to vote against the search committee composition, a position that was decisively outvoted by other board members. But, although in this immediate decision, Shoemaker lost — her arguments did not lead the group to change direction — a negative assessment of her talk is not warranted. When we look at this deliberation process in a larger frame, her talk on this occasion functioned to shape longer-term outcomes. In the subsequent election a key issue became the reasonableness of the incumbents' conduct in board meetings, both with each other and in dealing with members of the public (Craig and Tracy 2005; Tracy 1999; Tracy and Muller 2001). Were members of the board majority acting democratically with each other and the larger public? Were they exercising good judgment in the decisions with which they were entrusted? This interactive segment, as well as others like it, helped create a community impression that the board leaders were acting "undemocratically." In the election that followed, the president and the two others majority coalition members running for election were voted out of office, and Shoemaker became president.

Arriving at a reconstruction of the problems, conversational techniques, and situated ideals of a practice, such as school board meetings, requires observing and

reflecting on multiple instances and kinds of interaction from the viewpoints of various categories of participants. A developed reconstruction needs to attend to the larger interactional scene. Based on this single analysis, we would highlight the following. First, using AIDA makes visible a problem. When elected officials in community groups know their opinions are in the minority, they face a difficulty. As elected officials, brought to power though a process of voting, they are expected to show respect for democratic decision-making. They are also expected to exert influence and shape policies and decisions in a direction consistent with the views they advocate. How to do this is a major challenge when members know they will be outvoted. Shoemaker's moves, analyzed above, point to some of the conversational techniques that persons in this position can and do use. In essence, Shoemaker's way of posing questions and reformulating others' answers functioned as challenges to the good judgment and fairness of the board majority, while displaying her own commitment to democratic process (i.e., willingness to be outvoted). Simply put, when elected officials cannot affect the immediate decision, their talk can be employed to shape the larger decision-making context.

Finally, analysis of a single interaction, such as we have done here, is inadequate for developing a situated ideal of school board meeting conduct. Construction of situated ideals, an important aim within AIDA, necessitates looking at multiple instances of a kind of interaction along with collecting and studying participant interviews and institutional documents. In the contextual crevices — the spaces among what people actually do, how they evaluate their own and others' actions within the practice itself, in interviews, and in institutional documents — are to be found the raw materials for reconstructing a situated ideal. Based on study of materials from the larger project (Craig and Tracy 2005; Tracy 1999; Tracy and Craig 2003; Tracy and Muller 2001), the exchange offers a glimmer of the ideal that participants seem to hold. A belief in the goodness of "democracy/democratic process," seems to be part of the ideal for school board meetings. Participants' situated ideal, however, is different from that which philosophers and political theorists stake out in conceptual essays. The ideal for school board meetings is one that recognizes the value of extended talking and consensus-decision-making, and, at the same time, voting and majority rule to settle differences (Mansbridge 1980). It is an ideal that assumes the desirability of elected officials exercising their judgment and at the same time assumes that elected officials should represent their constituents (Schudson 1998). In addition, the situated ideal is one that sees formal rules as the cornerstone of fairness but also seems to recognize that rules, at least on particular occasions, can be impediments to "real democracy." Stated a bit differently, the situated ideal for school board meeting conduct, reconstructed from what participants say, espouse, and criticize, is a dilemmatic ideal. It is not philosophically coherent, but it is pragmatically useful and defensible. The situated

ideal for American school board meetings identifies competing criteria for assessing conduct and leaves the selection of applicable criteria for participant argument in the interaction moment. The situated ideal shapes and constrains conduct and at the same time is a *resource* for justification and critique.

2. Studying interaction: A disciplinary conversation

2.1 Disciplinary discourses[2]

Academic disciplines are discourse communities. Every academic discipline is "a conversational community with a tradition of argumentation" (Shotter 1997: 42) that participates along with other disciplines in broader discourse communities — those that constitute the academic community at large — with their own traditions of argumentation. Academic disciplines are not founded upon eternally fixed categories of knowledge; they are objects that emerge and evolve in the discourses of the academic community. Rhetorical resources for constructing and legitimizing disciplines can be found in intellectual, institutional, and sociocultural contexts: intellectual contexts of classic and current texts, theories, problems, modes of analysis, etc.; institutional contexts of universities and departments, professional and scholarly associations, funding agencies, publishers, libraries, databases, and associated classification schemes; and sociocultural contexts of ordinary concepts and practices more or less deeply ingrained in the cultural belief systems and habits of the society at large. Each discipline is constituted in its own particular way, in part, by being routinely contrasted against neighboring disciplines. As Godzich (1986: x) commented, "the mutual relation of the disciplines is never one of autonomy or of heteronomy, but some sort of complicated set of textual relations that needs to be unraveled in each instance." This process can be illustrated briefly in the cases of three disciplines central to our present discussion: sociology, linguistics, and communication.

The "sociological perspective" of sociology can be defined only against a background that includes traditions of argumentation about sociology's differences from history, psychology, anthropology, economics, and other disciplines. Classic writings in sociology assert the uniqueness and importance of a sociological perspective with compelling intellectual force, but sociologists have always disagreed among themselves about the meaning and value of such a perspective. The sociological tradition can be read as a series of arguments about how much and in what ways sociology differs from other disciplines. Perspectives within sociology can be

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2. Portions of this section have been adapted from Craig (2003).

described as economic, cultural, historical, political, psychological, and so forth. Thus, the conversation within sociology internalizes the conversation between sociology and other disciplines (indeed it constitutes much of that interdisciplinary conversation). If the idea of a sociological perspective were no longer felt to be worth discussing, even among sociologists, then the conversation would break up or turn to other topics and sociology, as a coherent intellectual enterprise constituted as such in the discourse of disciplines, would cease to exist. However unlikely this scenario may seem, sociologists have sometimes expressed the fear that something like it may be happening (Halliday and Janowitz 1992; Osborne and Rose 1997; Turner and Turner 1990).[3]

The discourse community of linguistics has been shape by a debate over "autonomous linguistics," the idea that language is an autonomous structure independent of social behavior generally (Newmeyer 1986). Although many linguists, and especially those who identify as sociolinguists or anthropological linguists, would not agree with this position, it is a position that cannot be ignored. For linguists, the position that language is not autonomous is controversial and must be argumentatively defended. In sociology and communication, in contrast, the interpenetration of language and the social is generally taken for granted. Few sociologists or communication scholars would dispute such a claim. For them, the arguable issues concern *how* language and society are connected.

Our own discipline of communication studies, although notoriously heterogeneous and not yet fully institutionalized, is not without its own distinct traditions of argumentation (Craig 1989, 1999, 2003). Tracy (2001) described several features as characterizing a communicative approach to interaction.[4] A first feature is the prominence of strategy and audience as key terms in analysis of interactional moments. Second is the attention given to problematic interaction, including persuasive and conflict situations, whether the conflicts are between people or are among an actor's multiple situated aims. Third, seeing talk as a form of practical and moral action has deep roots in the communication field (going back to the ancient verbal arts of rhetoric and dialectic), even while it is important note that it is by no means the dominant tradition at the present time. Finally, communication research about interaction has tended to use a more argumentative writing style than is typically used in other social science disciplines (Tracy 1988). This greater

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3.   On the history and disciplinary identity of sociology, also see: Collins (1985), Lepenies (1986), Levine (1995), Mazlish (1989), and Ross (1991).

4.   The essay, addressing linguists included 5 features that distinguished a communicative kind of discourse analysis. The first, which applies to discourse analysis, but not the study of interaction was a preference for discourse that was interactive (i.e., talk) rather than written texts.

amount of argumentative discourse accomplishes many things, but one important one is to discursively enact communication as a heterogeneous discipline in which a wide range of assumptions cannot be taken for granted but must be argumentatively defended in each publication.

2.2   Interactional sociolinguistics, conversation analysis, and AIDA in their disciplinary contexts

IS originated in linguistics, CA in sociology, and AIDA in communication. Each of the three disciplines is a distinct discourse community with a particular intellectual-institutional history that forms a background for judging claims that can be straightforwardly asserted or assumed in research versus claims that are controversial and must be justified by explicit arguments appropriate to that discipline.

Until the last few decades, as Schegloff (Cmejrkova and Prevignano 2003a) has noted, social scientists did not regard ordinary interaction as deserving systematic study. To merit study, interaction needed to be either defective (e.g., mental retardation or schizophrenia) or seen as directly related to profit-making (e.g., salesmanship, negotiation). This lack of interest in ordinary talk no longer persists. All kinds of informal and institutional interaction have been or are being studied by discourse scholars. The interactional-conversational-linguistic turn of so many social science disciplines has been impelled by diverse forces, but certainly two important ones have been the discipline-challenging moves of Gumperz and Hymes (1972) in linguistics and anthropology, and of Sacks (1992) in sociology.

In the early 1970s, Gumperz and Hymes, working at the intersection of linguistics and anthropology, developed the ethnography of speaking, an approach that challenged the dominant traditions of both disciplines. In anthropology at that time, little attention was given to speaking and language. How, Gumperz and Hymes asked, can culture be understood if attention is not given to how people speak to others in the events that compose their lives? IS, the second stream that flowed from the ethnography of speaking tradition, attended more to the field of linguistics, and especially the subfield of sociolinguistics. To understand verbal exchanges, Gumperz (1982b: 1) argued, requires "knowledge and abilities which go considerably beyond the grammatical competence we need to decode short isolated messages." In framing the proposal this way, interactional sociolinguistics can be seen as centrally arguing with fellow linguists. The proposal takes for granted a central goal of linguistics — to explicate knowledge underlying "language"— but disagrees with many linguists as to where that knowledge is to be grounded. Not in the grammatical or semantic properties of the code (linguistics, proper), nor in social and language variables detached from interaction (sociolinguistics,

e.g., Labov 1966); instead, Gumperz claimed, the most interesting component of language knowledge is to be found in social interaction.

The idea of *contextualization cue*, perhaps Gumperz's most important idea, necessitated attending to linguistically peripheral information (e.g., prosody, discourse particles) to develop a good picture of what situated meanings were being made and how interactional problems could arise (Levinson 2003). Not only did Gumperz's discipline affect his argument but his area of specialization also did. That Gumperz was an *anthropological* linguist influenced the interaction scenes he selected for study. Although a variety of interaction genres have been studied (e.g., Gumperz 1982a), they have almost entirely involved persons of different speech communities. In pursuit of understanding this kind of complex interaction, interactional sociolinguistic studies have drawn upon interviews, analysis of text genres such as African American preaching (Gumperz 1982c), and, on occasion, simulations (Akinnaso and Ajirotutu 1982). In reflecting on the intellectual contributions of Gumperz, Levinson noted (2003: 32), "Gumperz's analyses of conversation have nothing of the theoretical cleanliness to be found e.g. in conversational analysis. His tools are eclectic and the toolbox cluttered." Gumperz's students (e.g., Tannen 1986) and grand-students (e.g. Yamada 1992) have continued the tradition of using multiple means to understand situated sense-making. It was within the disciplinary context of linguistics, particularly in the American academic scene, that Gumperz and students' focus on interaction, and moreover, a functional approach to it, was radical.

In communication, taking a functional approach is mainstream. For communication scholars, function and its close relative, strategy, are taken-for-granted key concepts to use in studying social life (Craig and Tracy 1983). In contrast to that of CA, Gumperz's influence in the field of communication has been relatively limited. An unsympathetic reading of his work could frame him as asserting no more than a disciplinary commonplace. That communicative functions are important is an unquestioned assumption in the discourse community of communication studies.

Although IS and Gumperz's work are not synonymous, for many purposes they can be treated as alternative forms of reference. This is not the case with CA and Schegloff's work. CA is a broad enterprise. Many scholars internationally and across disciplines currently would define themselves as doing CA or being strongly influenced by "it." Yet, as CA has been taken up in locations outside the US and in disciplines outside sociology, it has to some degree been refashioned. In each case, CA has merged with other impulses that are specific to the academic tradition (US, European) and the particular discipline.

"CA" in communication (e.g. Beach 1996; Glenn, LeBaron and Mandelbaum 2003), linguistics (Ochs, Schegloff and Thompson 1996), or feminist psychology

(Kitzinger and Frith 1999; Speer 2002) — to identify only three of the most obvious alternatives — each has a distinctly different flavor from the kind of CA that Schegloff does. Moreover, in contrast to what is stated in the discussion about CA with Schegloff that occurred in the Prevignano and Thibault (2003b) volume, in many intellectual corners (e.g., Hutchby and Wooffitt 1999), Harvey Sacks is treated as the originator of CA. This way of framing CA is especially visible in work that builds on Sacks' analyses of membership terms (Fitzgerald and Housely 2002; Hester and Eglin 1997). Sometimes this work is treated as a kind of CA; at other times it is treated as something entirely different and labeled "membership categorization analysis," an approach to be contrasted with CA.

What is to be treated as inside or outside of CA is by no means obvious. When, for instance, does a study become CA-influenced rather than a piece of CA scholarship proper? Is any study that goes beyond claims that can be grounded in the recipient's uptake not a CA study? Is all the work done by visible conversation analysts actually CA? For instance, would the quantitative coding study of questions in US presidential press conferences conducted by CA scholars Clayman and Heritage (2002), be considered CA? How much ethnographic work can a CA scholar do and how can it be used in interpretation of an interactional scene before the work's CA status is called into question? Are studies that pursue issues such as gender inequality through a close look at conversations that have been transcribed using the Jeffersonian transcription system CA research?

We do not have answers to these questions. The point we wish to highlight is that as CA has become widely influential, its boundaries have become less clear. In this more intellectually diffuse landscape, Schegloff can be seen as anchoring a position that emphasizes a structural view. A leap from interaction structure to language structure is a small one. That this is so, we believe, accounts for the spreading attractiveness of Schegloff's version of CA among linguists. His view of CA meshes with assumptions about structure and function familiar to the discourse community of linguistics. Interestingly, other CA scholars (e.g., Drew 1992, 1998; Pomerantz 1989/90), who build on Sacks' less structural ideas, seem to have been somewhat less influential in linguistics but more influential in functionally-focused disciplines like psychology and communication.

At its inception, CA both sought to address a key sociological issue and challenge the position most sociologists were taking toward it. CA developed a way to understand social structure and offered a radical critique of the macro, "top-down" kind of answers that were and continue to be dominant in sociology. Initially, studies of interaction in CA focused on conversations among family and friends, often on the telephone, or among juvenile delinquents in treatment, suicide hotlines (Sacks 1992), or exchanges with the police (Zimmerman 1984), all interaction sites traditionally connected to sociology. Today, CA and CA-influenced

studies can be found of all kinds of interaction. Much more than interactional sociolinguistics, CA has succeeded in tearing loose from its disciplinary mooring. As it has done so, though, its character has become fuzzier.

2.3   The distinct contribution of AIDA

AIDA shares with IS a concern with problematic interaction. But, the kinds of problems to which AIDA and IS give attention are different. Operating within a linguistic tradition, Gumperz has built an analytic frame on the opposition between central and peripheral linguistic information (Levinson 2003). Lexical and syntactic kinds of information are treated as focal, whereas prosody, the use of discourse particles, and several other features are seen as background language information. Gumperz 's research has highlighted the problems that occur within language processes (e.g., vocal intonation patterns) that are largely out of awareness. IS, as is true of culture-attentive discourse approaches generally, can help people recognize that moments of interactional trouble arise from reasonable but culturally-specific meaning-cueing practices. In contrast, AIDA is primarily interested in institutional problems that arise among nationally and ethnically similar persons. Rather than cultivating better understanding of subtle out-of-awareness practices, AIDA seeks to make visible discourse strategies that can be named, reflected upon, and adopted by participants to make their practice work better.

A second distinctive feature of AIDA is its metatheoretical stance. Instead of pursuing the building of a descriptive science of interaction as Schegloff espouses for CA, or exposing ideology and social inequity as CDA aims to do, AIDA's approach to the study of interaction is guided by its practical theory view of research. AIDA aims to develop practically useful and morally defensible reconstructions of interactional problems, conversation techniques, and situated ideals of a variety of communicative practices. With an end goal of enabling people to better manage the very particular communication practice that they care about, AIDA, as its name suggests, is a discourse approach that aims to be action implicative.

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