JOURNAL FOR THE PSYCHOLOGY OF LANGUAGE LEARNING

IAPLL

Research Article

Intuition and the Dialogic Presentation of Self: When Intuition Fails and Self-Presentations are Fractured

Anne Feryok, *University of Otago, New Zealand*

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1499-7476

anne.feryok@otago.ac.nz

ABSTRACT

Our everyday language use is mostly intuitive (Lieberman, 2000), in the sense of tacit and automatic, and it reveals ourselves in what we say and how we say it. In this study I use the interaction order—the idea that social facts such as identity are constituted by social interaction—to interpret a research interview that was threatened by my assumptions. My assumptions were aligned with the culture order of the New Zealand, in which the dominant English-origin culture assumes its ways of being as ordinary or neutral, while the minority Māori culture must, in effect, become bicultural. Early in the interview, my assumptions fractured the participant's presentation of his identity. The participant, Nik, was one of eleven volunteers for follow-up interviews to a larger survey study about language attitudes and practices in New Zealand. Using interactional sociolinguistics, I show how our interactions during the interview exemplified the dialectic between two intuitions about language use: our moral commitment to successful interaction and our everyday reliance on normative interactional structures. As Nik introduced and elaborated on his Māori heritage, mutual misunderstandings developed during which I fractured his reflection of his identity, which we had to negotiate in order that the interview continue. As the interview ended, Nik took the floor to tell a short story in which he overcame my fractured reflection of his self by presenting how he was accepted by Māori. The narrative not only enabled me to better recognize who he was, but also enabled me to recognize how his narrative transcended the dialectical tension between interactional aims and normative structures in interaction.

Keywords: culture order, fractured reflections, language intuitions, language and identity, research interviews

Journal for the Psychology of Language Learning
ISSN: 2642-7001
(2023) Volume 5, Issue 2, pp. 61–75
https://doi.org/10.52598/jpll/5/2/6

INTRODUCTION

Imagine as you approach a café that you are thinking of an old friend you haven't seen in a while. As you reach the door and think about giving them a call, why there they are, reaching for the door just as you do. You are quite likely to say, "I must be intuitive! I was thinking of you and here you are!" That is one everyday sense of intuition—prescience. Now imagine continuing the conversation as you enter a café. Quite likely witty you and your equally witty friend will have laughed and commented on your intuition. Meanwhile, both of you are opening the door, entering the premises, navigating tables, chairs, and people to reach the barista and place your orders while you continue your conversation.

Even a surprise encounter devolves into multiple simultaneously performed complex but routine linguistic and physical actions that require little conscious attention. This everyday experience is another everyday sense of *intuition*—"the subjective experience associated with the use of knowledge gained through implicit learning" (Leiberman, 2000, p. 109). This second sense of intuition is the focus here.

These intuitive social actions and cognitions (Lieberman, 2000) that guide our interactions also involve both the tacit (as opposed to planned) means through which we manage how we project our impressions of ourselves to others, as Goffman (1959) discussed in *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life*. In many situations, intuitions guide how we act to the extent that when our intuitions fail us, our interactions may founder. When that happens, we may know that something has gone wrong, but we may not know how or why.

This study is about a research interview I conducted in which I realized the interaction was going wrong without understanding how or why. At the time, I felt the participant was responsible for failing to participate appropriately in the interview. The interview was a voluntary follow-up to a survey about two areas. One area was language attitudes and governmental policies in New Zealand. The other was the language beliefs and experiences of students taking TESOL courses. One volunteer, Nik, was a student I remembered from a class I had taught who I had assumed, based on appearances, to be Pākehā (a descendent of European settlers in New Zealand). At the start of the interview, I tried to hide my frustration when Nik not only failed to answer my first interview question, but instead began talking about his background, including his Māori heritage, over the first 44 turns. Reading the entire transcript only reinforced how often Nik responded to questions by telling personal anecdotes rather than providing direct answers. At the time, it seemed like I had lost control of the interview.

With time comes perspective, and for researchers that can mean new understandings of old data. A decade later, I came across the interview while searching for a discourse sample to use in an assessment for a class I taught on interaction and identity. Although I decided the interview was unsuitable material as an assessment, I became very interested in what I was reading. Here was a participant who, without being prompted, was relating their own language history—and a great deal of their life story, too, which provided a uniquely New Zealand bicultural context. My own role in the interview, however, did not shine so brightly; I recognized that my interactional intuitions had failed me. Having discourse analysis tools in the intervening years, I could now use them to help me understand how and why that failure occurred. Little did I realize that I would also uncover that my tacit bias as a majority language and culture member—despite me not being a New Zealander—reflected the New Zealand culture order, showing the hegemonic power of Anglo-American English as a majority language and culture. I had fractured the reflection of how Nik presented himself to me by jumping to conclusions about his Māori heritage. The understanding I have developed by analyzing what I expected as a researcher and how I responded to Nik has changed how I understand myself and how I try to interact with others.

Why do I claim that my intuitions failed me? One reason is that I recall feeling as if I was somehow missing something during the interview. The main reason, however, is that I remained unaware of what I had missed until I consciously analyzed the data as discourse, returning to it repeatedly from mid-2020 to mid-2023. This study is an effort to present my understanding of how my discursive language choices functioned over the interaction to interfere with the participant's efforts to present his self. To do this, I use interactional sociolinguistics, which is based on Goffman, among others, especially his work on interaction (1983) and the presentation of the self (1959).

BACKGROUND

Intuition and the Interaction Order

Intuition is simply another word for "the invisibility of everyday life" (Erikson, 1986, p. 121), that is, implicit processes that form everyday practices. One everyday practice we all engage in is presenting our own self and recognizing other's selves. Interactional sociolinguistics uses discourse analysis techniques to show how social identities are constituted by our interactions, which Goffman (1983) termed the interaction order.

The interaction order, according to Rawls (1987), involves a dialectic between the moral commitment to an interaction and the normative social structures of an interaction. Interactants make a moral commitment to exchange meaningful verbal actions to meet their interactional goals. To do that, interactants must meet practical interactional conditions and norms, such as speaking clearly and taking turns appropriately. As Grice (1975) put it, we adhere to a cooperative principle. Of course, people can violate that principle and be uncooperative. Rawls (1987) dialectic focuses on that tension between a moral choice being moral precisely because it is freely made and the necessity of having to conform to expectations in order to succeed. We have agency; we don't have to conform; we can challenge, violate, resist, and withdraw from both the meaning and the normative structure. But if we do that, we can't exchange meaning, and we fail to meet our interactional goals. We therefore make a moral choice to conform to the structural requirements in order to interact effectively. The key point is, *and so does the other person*. Therefore, Rawls concludes that a successful interaction resolves this dialectic. We assert our agency by accepting the conditions that enable others to assert their agency too. We both choose to conform. In choosing agency and conforming together, we recognize each other as selves as well as communicate meaning. As in all dialectics, the seemingly circular logic is not circular, but a spiral, in which an apparent contradiction is resolved by close analysis, in this case, of the conditions of interaction.

The interaction order is complex because interaction involves many different uses of language in many different contexts. Two aspects of language use that are germane to this study are seeking relevance (Sperber & Wilson, 1987) and maintaining face (Goffman, 1967). Relevance concerns the assumptions we make in order to achieve understanding (e.g., such as meaning the same thing by a word in a specific context), while face involves self-esteem and the desire for autonomy and solidarity. Both processes are mutually influential and normally below consciousness, but we can become aware of them, and when we do so they can become interconnected. When we fail to achieve understanding, it can lead to the loss of face for one or both interactants, which in turn can interfere with the presentation and recognition of their selves.

Goffman's work was (and is) powerful because it focuses on illuminating the practices involving language that we have been socialized into performing automatically: categorizing and individuating interactants and managing interactional benefits and risks through continual adjustments. This process, face-work, means that "tacit cooperation will naturally arise so that the participants together can attain their shared but differently motivated objectives" (Goffman, 1967, p. 29). Goffman concludes that societies could not exist if people could not self-regulate their behavior by considering its effects on each other's face. As Rawls and Duck (2017) point out, Goffman's conclusion implies that face threats can literally fray the social fabric of a society.

The seed of hope that Goffman plants is that shared objectives—which I interpret as successful interaction—can involve different motivations, which I interpret to mean each interactant's self-presentation. The condition that enables success is by means of tacit cooperation, that is, successfully performing face-work. The challenge for interactants is that mutual understanding (of language, of speech acts, of self-presentations) partially depends on accurately understanding intentions, but intentions are underdetermined by language. Words can mean something different to each participant. Most notably, deictic words (e.g., I, you, he, she, it; now, then; here, there) rely on context, an extralinguistic condition, for their interpretation. According to Sperber and Wilson (1987), interactants assume the easiest interpretation that makes sense in the context. However, that assumption just moves the potential for misunderstanding to context. If the interactants have different definitions of the situation, they will not respond as expected. Their intuitions will fail them. Such misunderstandings threaten both interactants' faces, making them hard to repair through interactional moves such as

comprehension checks and clarification requests unless there are mutual efforts to preserve each other's faces.

Usually, interaction is studied at the microlevel of dyads or small groups. But even though face and relevance are assumed to be universal, their manifestations differ across cultures and even social groups and subcultures. In particular, cultural differences can mean that seemingly similar situations are differently defined, entailing different expectations about what should occur during the interaction. During an interaction, interactional adjustments are contingent on what happens over milliseconds and seconds, whereas situational definitions coalesce in a community over decades and centuries. There isn't time to catch up on macrolevel sociocultural norms in the midst of microlevel conversational turn-taking, but there is time for academics to carefully consider it. The role of macrolevel forces in interaction is addressed in two recent theoretical concepts relevant to this study: the culture order (Holmes, 2018) and fractured reflections (Rawls & Duck, 2017).

The Culture Order

The culture order is "the relative social status of different social and cultural groups" (Holmes, 2018, p. 33). New Zealand is officially bicultural: Pākehā (descendants of European settlers) are 70% of the population; indigenous Māori are the largest minority at 16.5% (StatsNZ/Tatauranga Aotearoa, n.d.). However, as Holmes (2018) points out, "Pākehā ways of doing things dominate New Zealand society, while most Māori are bicultural" (p. 36). This order arises from majority culture members taking their assumptions for granted; minority culture members tend to be more aware of differences and their influence than majority culture members. As Holmes shows, there are many seemingly common assumptions, such as modesty being valued, that have different significance in the two cultures. For Pākehā, modesty is a consequence of egalitarianism among individuals, whereas for Māori it is a consequence of the shared face of the collective. The culture order is useful because it encompasses these macrosocial facts about majority and minority differences in relation to each other; their examination is a necessary part of understanding an interaction.

The culture order may be particularly challenging for bicultural Māori-Pākehā individuals who may self-identify with one or both cultures. An interview study of adults with one Māori and one Pākehā parent, who were raised on the South Island away from their North Island *iwi* (tribal affiliation), discussed the assumptions that others had of them. These assumptions included stereotypes about their language proficiency and cultural knowledge (Paringatai, 2014). As Paringatai (2014) points out,

> When they went against these national stereotypes of what a Māori should know or do then they 'weren't really Māori.' These situations also created feelings of inferiority and embarrassment that inhibited their ability to feel pride in their Māori ethnicity, which in turn affected their identity as a person of Māori descent. (p. 51)

An ethnographic study of a high school showed that bicultural students who attended a Māori-English bilingual unit mostly identified as Māori, whereas bicultural students who attended the mainstream unit identified mostly as Pākehā (Doerr, 2015). Doerr also noted that both students and teachers assumed some mainstream unit students were Pākehā, even though they identified as Māori if they asked about their background.

Tacit assumptions about people's backgrounds are a form of bias. One widely known account that addresses bias characterizes it as part of the dual process, *fast and slow thinking* (Kahneman, 2011). *Fast thinking* is the primary thinking system—intuition, in other words—based on sensory engagement with the world, where rapid responses ensure survival. One-way responses become rapid is through the use of cognitive heuristics, which is how judgmental biases arise, such as rapidly categorizing an individual and then attributing the assumed characteristics of the category to the individual, rather than judging the individual (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974). *Slow thinking* is conscious thought, which enables careful analysis that can isolate and examine ideas, especially so that multiple perspectives can be entertained (Kahneman, 2011).

What is problematic, then, is not the mental process of bias in itself, but the racist ideas and actions perpetuated by bias (Kendi, 2023) because of unexamined or poorly examined assumptions. These assumptions may have origins in sociohistorical relationships that may, for example, no longer exist, have changed, or are differently understood and/or valued. In terms of social relationships, this means that conscious analysis can expose and correct

the inaccuracies of rapid conclusions based on limited and spontaneous perception, which begins by taking up the perspective of others (Kahneman, 2011).

Fractured Reflections

Fractured reflections (Rawls & Duck, 2017) are "failures by others to recognize presentations of self" (p. 38). In a fractured reflection, the definition of the situation differs between interactants, "making it impossible to achieve mutual understanding" (Rawls & Duck, 2017, p 38). In Rawls & Duck's data, black executives defined themselves by their roles and qualities, but they encountered junior employees (both black and white) who did not based on their assumption that executives were white. For example, junior employees would question the authority of black executives to issue directives or ask for directives to be confirmed by another person—who might also be junior to the executive. Such nonrecognition of their identity often led the black executives to give a null response that ranged from refusing to acknowledge the junior employee's response to withdrawing from the interaction altogether. Null responses in turn were perceived by junior employees to be inappropriate or rude. As Rawls and Duck point out, however important withdrawal may be for maintaining identity when it is persistently unrecognized, in general it is a strategy that threatens the commitment to reciprocal interaction. The cycle of responses shows that both parties have lost trust in each other, which simply perpetuates the cycle.

Fractured reflections can be expanded to involve not only nonrecognition of presentations of self, but also the misrecognition that occurs when the majority culture assumes its norms and values incorporate those of the minority culture. For example, in Paringatai's (2014) study, bicultural participants took their Māori ancestry to be the basis for their Māori identity, but majority culture members took linguistic and cultural knowledge as markers of authentic identity. Although Paringatai points out that ancestry, connection to ancestral land, ability in language and customs, and tribal knowledge are all components of Māori identity, the Māori community has always accepted anyone who has Māori ancestry. However, she also points out that interracial marriage and urbanization has caused many people of Māori ancestry to have lost contact with their Māori relatives and land, and language, customs, and knowledge. The participants in Paringatai's study experienced how others expected them to have the traditional connections and knowledge:

> They faced expectations placed upon them by others (both Māori and non-Māori) to conform to a national image of what a Māori person should be and how a Māori person should act. (…) When they went against these national stereotypes of what a Māori should know or do then they 'weren't really Māori.' These situations also created feelings of inferiority and embarrassment that inhibited their ability to feel pride in their Māori ethnicity, which in turn affected their identity as a person of Māori descent. (p. 51)

Paringtai concludes that it is no longer possible to make traditional assumptions about what it means to identify as Māori, nor to make assumptions based on identity labels, names, or skin color. In this context, making assumptions about someone's Māori or bicultural identity can fracture their identity.

Although Rawls and Duck (2017) argue that maintaining conversational reciprocity is necessary to prevent the cycle of nonrecognition and misunderstanding from perpetuating itself, their study used retrospective narrative data, which did not afford an opportunity to precisely examine how fractured reflections occurred, much less how they could be repaired. Holmes (2018) points out that the culture order takes a macrosocial perspective on a phenomenon that occurs at a personal level in interactions among individuals, which can be captured using interactional sociolinguistic discourse analysis. Fractured reflections (Rawls & Duck, 2017) are one kind of individual enactment of the culture order. The majority culture member ignores the self-presentation of the minority culture member, who then responds by ignoring the majority culture member or even withdrawing from the interaction. The majority culture member then feels aggrieved that the minority culture member has not engaged with them, reinforcing their implicit bias. Since that ends the interaction, fractured reflections are a benchmark against which other interactions can be compared, inviting questions such as: Do assumptions play a role in ending or threatening to end an interaction? How? If not, how does the interaction proceed? Why did it not end?

This study uses fractured reflections as a benchmark in order to examine interactional data from a research interview in which I examine how I fractured the reflection of a bicultural Māori-Pākehā individual, Nik.

METHODOLOGY

Context

Research interviews are a type of interaction. They are typically conducted face to face, but they also involve institutional expectations about normative research practices from universities, human ethics committees, disciplinary associations, and the research community. Goffman viewed institutions as framing meaning (Rawls, 1987). Institutional expectations for academic research frame how researchers collect and analyze data and present results. For example, interviews involve the social order through researchers' institutional connections. Researchers are generally regarded as holding more power than participants, such as deciding which topics are investigated. Rawls (1989) concludes that the interaction order involves a moral commitment to a shared order that arises locally in an interaction, yet is constrained by these institutional frames.

Participant

The data is from a larger research project of two cohorts of students in TESOL classes who took a survey on the role of context in language attitudes, language learning, and language teaching (Feryok, 2011). Both cohorts involved New Zealand students of different cultural backgrounds and Malaysian students of different cultural backgrounds. Those wishing to volunteer for follow-up interviews provided a few biographical and contact details, as Nik did. In the interview, Nik voluntarily expanded on these details, which at the time seemed to be at the expense of my interview topics.

Nik was a professional musician in his mid-30s who had recently completed a Bachelors of Art with Honors in Music. He then enrolled in the Graduate Diploma in Second Language Teaching as a secondary income source when he was touring overseas. Nik was the only man who volunteered and the only participant who had indicated Māori was a language he had heard in the home as a child. Because of this, I realized he would be a valuable participant, but even though I remembered him as Pākehā (a descendent of European settlers), I did not consider what listing *te reo Māori* (the Māori language) meant to him. My memory of Nik as Pākehā and my failure to think about his relationship to te reo Māori were the first assumptions I made that could fracture his self-presentation. In addition, I had taught Nik the previous semester, when I had formed the opinion that he was difficult to understand because he often struggled to initiate and complete utterances. These assumptions influenced my perception of the interview before it had even begun.

Procedures

The 23-minute interview was held in my office and audio-recorded on a small computer-compatible recording device in 2011. The interview questions were based on the eliciting greater detail about the survey topics. The first topic was on societal and governmental language learning attitudes and practices in New Zealand, the second topic was personal experiences, attitudes, and beliefs about language learning, and the third topic was personal experiences, attitudes, and beliefs about language teaching. I was especially interested in Nik's opinions on the first topic because he had added handwritten comments about it on the survey. The recording was then professionally transcribed by a native speaker of New Zealand English. I checked and corrected the 408-turn transcript against the recordings. (See Appendix for transcription conventions.)

At that time, I did not analyze the data because the interview did not proceed according to plan. As will be seen below, at the start of the interview, Nik appeared to take control, delaying my opportunity to ask interview questions in the order I had planned them. Even when he answered interview questions, it seemed that he did so in order to shift to topics that interested him: his family and childhood, his music and his travels. I felt that he had compromised the orderly progress of the interview and my right as the interviewer to direct that progress. In other words, I had expectations based on the institutional frame and social order that were not met, which produced a different interaction than I expected. The transcript, when it became available, reinforced my belief that much of the interview was not only off-topic but irrelevant to my aims. I therefore

excluded the interview from the initial data analysis. Doing so also appealed to my (intuitive?) preference for symmetry: I now had an even number of female participants who divided equally into two groups based on their national (but multicultural) backgrounds.

As mentioned in the introduction, I returned to the interview in 2020. I did a preliminary analysis of the final narrative in mid-2020. I then did an interactional sociolinguistic analysis of the narrative and the interview passages most closely related to it in late 2020. In 2021-2022 I did another more detailed analysis and began developing the interpretation of a fractured reflection within the culture order.

FINDINGS

How did I fracture Nik's reflection? I had a different definition of the situation based on my prior assumptions about my role as interviewer and about Nik. I also had evolving assumptions about the meaning and significance of Nik's talk. These can be summarized through the assumptions, presented in the order in which they first occurred, followed by my reassessment of them over three years of analysis and interpretation:

- I expected interview answers about New Zealand language learning attitudes and practices at the start; Nik oriented me to his background.
- I heard 'ethnic' humor because I 'knew' Nik was Pākehā; Nik used humor to index the complexity of his biculturality.
- I heard childhood anecdotes unrelated to the interview; Nik spoke about his lived experience as a bicultural New Zealander.
- I made spontaneous guesses based on my opinion of Nik as difficult to understand; Nik made indirect comments that I struggled to understand.
- I assumed the referent of an unclearly referring 'it' was the Māori language; Nik appeared embarrassed by what my assumption implied: that Nik knew te reo Māori.

The interview data are referred to by turn numbers in parentheses. *P* refers to the participant, Nik, while *I* refers to the interviewer, me.

My Normative Interview Expectations and Nik's Presentation of Self

I began by assuming topic control, confirming Nik's name and country of origin and asking him to "begin by telling me a little bit about learning languages in New Zealand." I then asked him to comment on the survey topic of "people's attitudes towards language learning in New Zealand." Nik responded (02) by assuming topic control, making us equal interactants:

Extract 1

02P yeah um . what's interesting as well is about um {I'm?} + four or five years old ?

03I mmhm

04P my parents were- um we lived up on the East Coast so and um- so at that age young age ? I + um + there's a lot of the + Māori {laughs}

05I oh okay

Nik's response (02) began with an acknowledgement, followed by a filled and a short pause, suggesting speech wasn't flowing easily, perhaps because he knew he was going to change the topic. By saying "as well" Nik explicitly acknowledged he was going to add something additional or different from the topic. Nik mentioned his age and, perhaps encouraged by my backchanneling (03), stated many Māori were in the area he grew up in (04). After the section of the interview presented in the extract above, Nik continued by asking me if I knew about a New Zealand movie (Utu) and an iwi (Tūhoe), a tribe from the area inland from the East Coast. It felt like I was the interviewee, rather than the interviewer, but my responses show that I acted cooperatively.

Nik's Ethnic Humor

Nik's line of questioning in 'interviewing' me led to him revealing that despite how he appeared, he was part Māori. I can now recognize that he was trying to gauge what I, an American, might have heard about Māori culture.

Extract 2

18P yeah yeah well my mother's um- I don't look much like it but I've I've got about an eighth or a quarter + Ngāti Porou it's called

19I okay alright

20P my brother like looks like a/{smiling}

21I /okay/ {smiling}

22P /real Māori so + {laughs} + see a bit + a funny thing

23I yeah {laughs}

24P it's on my mum's side but (.)

25I yeah yeah

By revealing his background, Nik set up an opportunity to name his iwi or tribe (18) and joke about his brother looking like a "real Māori" (22). Nik began by stating, "I've got about an eighth or a quarter + Ngāti Porou it's called" (18). Doerr (2015) argues that this kind of identity locution had different meanings for her participants: "The phrase 'having Māori' allowed multiple positionalities without sacrifice of personal integration or risk of contradiction" (p. 186). Nik's choice of words may well reflect his own way of resolving such issues, as Doerr suggests, while also pointing to the powerful influence of macrosocial discourses. It may also be a matter of the interactional adjustments of everyday conversation, reflecting Nik's intuitive understanding of the how best to present his Māori heritage to me in an interview. Or, it may possibly have been a planned description; he may have been trying to be accurate, as "an eighth or a quarter" may suggest. My "okay alright" (19) as I recall was strained; I was not comfortable talking about ethnicity, which I associated with talking about race in the United States. As Nik uttered line 20 I correctly predicted what he would say and since Nik was smiling, I also smiled. This was a conscious affiliative move I made as I repeated "okay," with the smile and the seemingly positive connotation of "okay" balancing the strain I felt and the meaning I wished to convey, which was something like a parent saying, "Okay that's enough. Stop that right now." My laughter in line 23 was also strained. In fact, I was embarrassed at hearing the joke Nik made, even though I accepted that Nik being Māori gave him the right to speak about being Māori, including in ways that I would regard as inappropriate if I said them.

I do not remember my reaction to learning Nik was part Māori, but it was unexpected, and I suspect that I would have needed time to process it consciously.

From Nik's Unclear Reference (30) to My Fractured Reflection (43)

Since I did not have time to process Nik's revelation about himself, I probably engaged in fast thinking to maintain turn-taking. This speed would have been in conjunction with my high involvement and fast-paced conversational style with considerable overlapping. In other words, I began making assumptions, and some of them occurred in order to complete Nik's incomplete turns.

Extract 3

30P so I understand the + yeah (.)

31I so you know Māori pretty well

32P well I I know + yeah + it's just + um it's completely different now + to ah how it was I mean

33I how do you mean?

34P well like conversational + and the protocol and everything + so +

35I it's changed?

36P well I I wouldn't (.) be able /to/

37I /ohh!/

38P me personally (.)

39I right right right right right

40P you know but yeah I know most of um the vocabulary and stuff /but/

41I /yeah/ yeah so you know it but maybe you're you're /a bit ru:sty/

42P /it's in the back/ recesses of my mind {both laugh}

43I so your Māori's a bit rusty now but you used to be much better at it okay

44P well (.) uh- (.) yeah . {softly; embarrassed}

45I yeah (.) {very softly; empathetic}

Line 30 is an example of an incomplete turn. Nik began an utterance, then paused, then said "yeah" with sentence final (falling) intonation, so that his utterance sounded complete, even if the idea—what Nik claimed to understand—was missing. I therefore confirmed his meaning by suggesting he knew Māori. I meant the language, but that is not what Nik would have understood. When Nik referred to Māori people he tended to say "the Māori" as he did above, that is, using 'the + adjective' to stand in for the name of a people in English. Simply saying 'Māori' as a noun is "a new use of the word resulting from Pākehā contact in order to distinguish between people of Māori descent and the colonisers" (Te Aka, 2023). I therefore appeared to have initiated an unclear reference, which then multiplied over the interaction when Nik used "it" (32) to refer to my use of 'Māori' and then I referred to Nik's use of 'it.' For example, I did not understand how the language could have become "completely different" (32) in Nik's lifetime and asked for clarification (33). Nik's response (34) confirmed my understanding of it as 'language' at that time (see 35 when I again request clarification). Nik then had to admit inability. At the time it seemed clear to me that he must be talking about language because that is what I had initially thought—I used heuristics and it biased my interpretation. I did not 'hear' that both of Nik's clarifications (34, 36) could mean cultural practices rather than language. Since Nik's turns 34 and 36 follow his turn 32, it now seems to me that what was "completely different" was Nik's situation. Later in the interview it became apparent that Nik was talking about himself when he had been living on a marae (meeting grounds) before he had started school. Thirty-some years later, Nik was an adult and he had not lived on a marae for some time; in addition, he had spent years traveling and working abroad. He may have been able to participate in conversations and protocols and customs as a child, but he could no longer do so as an adult.

This interpretation is confirmed both here and in the next passage to be discussed. Here, it is confirmed by the way I fractured his reflection. When Nik first admitted inability (36) I expressed surprise (37). It shows I really had not understood what he had meant, which prompted him to underscore that he meant himself—that he had changed (38). We both realized that we both knew that we had misunderstood each other and enthusiastically agreed (39). Unfortunately, it is still not clear what Nik was unable to do. Thus, when Nik referred to still knowing "vocabulary and stuff," I assumed he meant he had forgotten grammar because I was still assuming that te reo Māori was the referent for "it" and "Māori." In 41 I tried to clarify my understanding by focusing on the extent of Nik's understanding of te reo, ignoring whether it was the object of his understanding. My metaphor "rusty" was echoed as Nik overlapped me with his metaphor "in the back recesses of my mind" and we both spontaneously laughed at our shared understanding. There was a genuine sense of relief that we were past the awkward part, which was apparent in the fluency of Nik's turns 40 and 42 (only one disfluency) compared to earlier long turns with multiple disfluencies (e.g., 32, 34, and 36 had a total of thirteen disfluencies).

In line 43 I confirmed my understanding. Although "Māori" may have been ambiguous in English, "your Māori" was not; it could only mean language here. Although it is more obvious to hear it, even reading the transcription of line 44 makes Nik's sense of deflation and embarrassment clear. My response (45) makes it just as clear that I understood there was a misunderstanding and the discomfort it created for Nik, who again was positioned as inadequately Māori. Like the color of his skin, it carried the implication that he was not a 'real Māori.'

My normative expectations of interviews and my lack of understanding and lack of sensitivity fractured my reflection of Nik's self-presentation and caused Nik's loss of face. His response in turn 44 is not a withdrawal from communication nor a completely null response, but it is very close to both. It was close enough for me recognize that our interaction had gone very wrong.

Nik's Return to Te reo on the Marae: Re-Establishing Shared Understanding

A closer look at our interactions helps show how our interaction was put right.

Extract 4

46I yeah um did you have it in school

47P ah yip yip

48I yeah

49P yeah um [name deleted] I went to ah early primary school

50I oh okay cool

51P yeah there's quite a lot of singalong a lot of singalongs and things like that

52I yeah yeah

53P so was um hard to really it's not really like a it's like Spanish or it's just a different sort of a language I ((??)) it's quite

54I oh okay you mean the way it's taught is different

55P ah (.) yeah possibly

56I or you mean the languages themselves are /very different types/

57P /oh yeah oh you/ stay on a marae like um a lot of ah you know + tena koutou + tena koutou katoa and then the

58I okay

59P genealogy and place names /and yeah/

60I /oh right right right/ where yeah so you're using the language to: + do these cu:ltural custom

61P to basically understand it yeah (.)

62I yeah yeah yeah

63P there's all kinds of + I stayed on a marae for quite a long time…

At turn 44, the transcriber included Nik pausing with sentence final (falling) intonation after he broke off what sounded like the beginning of an utterance (even if it began with a filled pause). It also shows that I did not immediately begin speaking (45). That moment no doubt involved some fast thinking, and when I did speak, I began by repeating Nik's "yeah," which is an affiliative move (Stivers, 2008). Together with the pause it can express empathy or sympathy, either of which are tacit responses recognizing the human condition. My tone of voice reinforces that interpretation. In other words, I intuitively tried to mitigate Nik's obvious embarrassment. I followed with "um," which could also be an affiliative move as repeating Nik's previous filled pause.

My substantive response was to reapproach the language topic from a different direction by asking, "Did you have it in school?" (45). I cannot say if this was a conscious choice, but Nik's knowledge of Māori was an interview topic. Analyzing it now, I see this question may have had three interactional effects, which I present in order of how problematic they were. The most problematic effect was that I avoided acknowledging that a face threat had occurred. Since I had produced the face threat, I appear to be saving my own face by avoiding a face threatening act to myself, making an apology. However, my move also meant that Nik could avoid having to address the issue any further. Second, I imposed my interpretation of 'it' as meaning te reo Māori, which apparently was not what Nik had meant. However, it established a clear referent that helped create coherence from Nik's line of talk to my intended line of interview topics. Third, and closely related to this latter point, it kept the interaction going with a factual matter that was not overly focused on Nik's personal experience since it was equally about the New Zealand curriculum and typical school practices. It therefore met my aims, and since Nik had volunteered for the interview, and had written comments on the survey on this topic, it also appeared to meet his aims. So, although my response gained me control over the interview, it also enabled the interview to continue in a relatively coherent direction with a relatively neutral approach to a relevant topic. Nik responded by mentioning school te reo "singalongs" (51) that led Nik to contrast te reo Māori with other languages—an example of how Nik redirected my interview topics to his own interests. My turns at 54 and 56 show me trying to scaffold Nik into making a clear statement by offering a choice of answers; it is interesting that at turn 57 Nik did not choose one of my options, but instead tried to explain what he actually meant. Nik can therefore be seen as agentively resisting my efforts to express my meaning instead of his own meaning. His overlap of my turn 56 with an affirmative "oh yeah oh you" suggests he realized that I did not understand what he meant—that my limited dualistic approach to interpreting

his words missed the holistic point he was trying to make that was about culture, which involves language. Nik confirmed that he had not been talking about language per se, but something like Agar's (1994) *languaculture*—language wrapped up in culture and culture expressed in language. In turn 63, my repeated "right right right" and then my uncharacteristically slow, drawn-out pronunciations of "to" and "cultural," along with a hesitation, indicate that I was thinking. It suggests that I was also beginning to realize how much I had misunderstood Nik—that I was guilty of seriously underestimating the sophistication of his thinking because of the disfluency of his speech. I had also ignored the genuine challenges he faced in trying to describe his experiences as a pre-school child.

The phrase "to basically understand it" (61) pointed to Nik's beliefs, which he articulated later in the interview, that successful language learning requires immersion in the culture as well as the language. It also pointed to what Nik never fully articulated: that although he was recognized and thus identified as Pākehā, he was also Māori and had grown up among Māori and had participated in Māori cultural and linguistic practices.

From Interview to Conversation to Narrative

Over the next 300 some turns, Nik 'interviewed' me about my travels and then talked about his own travels, his musical career, and his personal life. He also talked more about his brother and about growing up on the marae. When he talked about his personal life, language attitudes arose; Nik had been strongly discouraged from learning te reo Māori, which he regretted, and which he attributed to New Zealand language and culture attitudes. I asked more interview questions as suitable openings occurred. In other words, we gradually fell into taking equitable turns—the interview became a conversation. I learned that Nik's experiences, attitudes, and beliefs formed a coherent whole: that language and culture belong together, whether they are learned as a child growing up with them, or through immersion while traveling.

In the final extract presented below, Nik tells a narrative that restored his face, returned us to the topics he had introduced early on, and regained him control of the floor. It occurred after I had formally ended the interview (394), which I confirmed when I finished flipping through the interview questions and my notes, saying "Um +++ yeah yeah." I had partially stood up to turn off the recorder, which was on the desk between us, when Nik spoke up in line 395 and I sat down to listen, which meant the recorder was left running, that Nik must have known it was running, and that therefore he must have wanted what he was saying to be recorded.

Nik's narrative is a traditionally structured narrative, but it is also highly interactive with backchanneling, which typically shows affiliation between interlocutors (Stivers, 2008), and overlapping, showing involvement and interest (Tannen, 1987) rather than interrupting, since the words uttered in the overlaps are clearly positive.

Extract 5

394I yeah um oka:y I think that's pretty much all the points I've got down here . Um +++ yeah yeah

395P I was just last night I was at a + um just an old fella a few doors down and he's + just found out he's terminally ill and that

396I /oh geeze/

397P /so it was/ a bit of a- but um + there was {laughs} quite a few Māori guys there eh having a singalong + and a few beers and .

398I ohhh /that's nice/

399P /it's good yeah/

400I oh gee yeah

401P I was strumming the guitar and/

402I /yeah yeah/

403P /good old folk tunes really um + some really good old Māori songs and they all just came back like I just remembered them like that

404I really it all just /came back/

405P /all the lyrics and/

406I that's great ohh

407P yeah and this guy was a real like Tūhoe {laughs}

Nik had the floor and I immediately responded to his orientation and abstract (395) by backchanneling my surprise (396). Nik overlapped (397) and made two false starts, possibly caused by the incongruity between stating the host had learned he was terminally ill (395) and laughing at his memory of the singalong (397). A companionable overlap (398, 399, 400) showed we shared a positive evaluation of the situation. Nik continued with the first complicating action (401) to which I backchanneled (402). In the second complicating action (403), Nik revealed he had been singing "good old Māori songs." I echoed (404) the last words of his line, registering the surprise he had expressed, which Nik both acknowledged and emphasized (405) by specifying he had remembered the lyrics (not just the music). I positively evaluated it (406), and Nik ended the narrative with his own positive evaluation (407), referencing several of his comments over the interview that acknowledged his admiration of the resilience and integrity of the Tūhoe iwi. Nik's laughter seemed to suggest that Nik felt gratified at being able to present how he was seen and heard at the gathering for his Tūhoe neighbor with "quite a few Māori guys" as Nik played and sang "good old Māori songs."

Throughout the interview Nik returned to his Māori heritage through his childhood memories, his knowledge, and his relationships. However, he never explicitly claimed a Māori identity. Perhaps the lack of that claim was the poignant point of contrasting himself with his "real" Māori brother. Nonetheless, or perhaps because of that, Nik intentionally chose to end the interview with the narrative, in which he presented himself as a musician playing and singing Māori songs. He chose to present himself as able to sing in Māori when immersed in a Māori cultural context, underlining his beliefs and language learning and indexing the differences between the worlds he lived in, perhaps even highlighting the difference between the 'right now' and 'last night'—both achievements.

The achievement of our mutual understanding of the narrative was shown in two ways. Affiliative backchanneling and positive overlapping showed how Nik accommodated my high involvement interactional style by echoing it himself. My recognition of the significance of Nik mentioning singalongs, Tūhoe, and te reo Māori lyrics, which indexed complicated and uncomfortable moments in the interview, showed what I learned from Nik through his presentation of self. Nik's narrative enabled us to see for ourselves that we did, after all, successfully interact with each other, thanks to our mutual commitment to the interaction.

CONCLUSION

The findings illustrate how intuitions failed me in a research interview but were overcome by commitment to the interaction. Just as we are unconscious of how we make intuitive language choices in our everyday interactions, so I was unconscious of how Nik and I were making intuitive language choices in our research interview. It is clear we became conscious enough of what we were saying to recognize that we misunderstood and to request clarification. However, consciousness of what is happening is not consciousness of how we arrived at those choices nor of how those choices functioned over the interview. As analysts, we cannot know what we understand unless we also understand how we arrived there. Different origins and different paths lead to different meanings because the contexts for meaning differ. Part of understanding how involves recognizing the linear constraints of face-to-face interaction. Interactions exist in physical time and are directional. It is worth noting that conversational turn-taking is fast (gaps between turns are about 200 milliseconds long), faster even than language production (words take about 600 milliseconds to produce), which suggests that a listener tacitly predicts (i.e., our brain predicts) what the speaker will say in order to plan a timely response (Levinson & Torreira, 2015).

In terms of linear constraints, conducting the first of the scheduled interviews only to find it not going according to plan may have kept my conscious attention too occupied to monitor my responses to Nik's presentation of his self until I had failed to attend to Nik's face, that is, until I failed to successfully perform a largely tacit activity. I made this assumption tacitly despite my conscious professional knowledge of the processes that led to te reo Māori becoming endangered and aspects of traditional Māori knowledge and culture being threatened and lost—a topic I covered in an introductory sociolinguistics paper that I taught at that time. It suggests that my interview preparation was not thorough enough because I hadn't considered the implications of Nik's exposure to te reo Māori in the home.

The discrepancy between my conscious knowledge and my assumptions reflects the durability of intuitive or tacit knowledge and its value as a heuristic available for use in fast thinking (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974). My assumptions enabled my quick responses to Nik's turns, which as a high involvement speaker were my way of showing my commitment to an interaction. However, Nik's slower utterances suggest he may have been actively thinking. Perhaps the carefully delivered utterance "yeah um what's interesting as well…" (2) with which he began the interview by taking topic control was planned. Perhaps the smoothly delivered narrative was prepared. If so, they were Nik's way of showing his commitment to the interview. As Holmes (2018) points out, we differently presented a shared orientation because our values differed: I was focused on efficient and successful interview outcomes; Nik was focused on making a genuine and relevant contribution.

Another way we differently showed our commitment to the interview turns on Rawl's (1987) ideas about resolution of the dialectic between making moral commitments (such as responding appropriately) in an interaction and reinforcing normative structures (such as respecting status) in an interaction. Both Nik and I showed a moral commitment to the interaction. Again, we had a shared orientation to a meaningful interaction, but our understanding and values differed such that our accommodation of each other also differed. The underlying dialectic manifested itself in our reciprocal positions in which I had to focus on the structural demands of an interview, which Nik had to accommodate by answering my interview questions and accepting my interactional style, while Nik had to focus on the interactional adjustments, which I had to accommodate by allowing Nik equal interactional rights and accepting his interactional style.

That such a difference was overcome simply by continuing the interview in the face of challenges may be the key to unfracturing. Unfracturing involved fracturing rising to consciousness when it occurred and then subsiding below consciousness through our mutual commitment to continue. Maybe we both became momentarily aware that we could end or we could try to continue, or maybe our brains simply pushed us to "just keep talking," but either way, we did not shift directions by talking about talking. Perhaps the intuition that failed me also saved me by allowing tacit negotiation to continue until it ultimately balanced the expectations I had as an interviewer of maintaining topic control and that Nik had as an interviewee of presenting his self through personal anecdotes.

Rawl and Duck's (2017) data is rather different. They describe that black executives withdraw through null responses, which junior employees perceived as inappropriate. That situation needs a different way to unfracture the fractured reflections of the black executives. Both parties need to be shown how their response logically presupposes the reciprocal nature of interaction and that both interactants share that expectation. If one interactant feels their face has been threatened by another, it is up to the other to maintain reciprocity by showing they did not intend a threat. If they don't recognize their effect, then it is up to the threatened individual to point it out in a way that does not shut down interaction. The strategy is still "just keep talking," but it's a different kind of conversation tailored to people who have not demonstrated the same degree of moral commitment. It requires talking about talking. I suggest that the strategy is still based on the reciprocity conditions of interaction even if the tactics require consciousness-raising of those who insult others and then feel insulted themselves by the response they receive.

These suggestions align with Holmes' (2018) point that the culture order becomes balanced by being open to differences and recognizing how different interactional expectations and values may involve shared orientations. She notes 'New Zealand' values are emerging across both cultures. Bicultural individuals can play a profound role in that emergence of new values. Of course, I cannot speak for Nik, but as Holmes points out, minority culture members are more conscious of the culture order. I suggest that bicultural individuals are the most conscious of all. The burden of understanding, therefore, lies with those who are less conscious, which is amply demonstrated by their tacit reproduction of implicit majority language and culture biases. In other words, if the interview had a lesson to be learned, it was the lesson I learned.

Author's Contributions

Anne Feryok conceived of the design of the study, collected the data, analyzed and interpreted the data, drafted and revised the article, and approved the final version of the article to be published.

Ethics Approval & Consent to Participate

The original study in which the data for this was collected was approved by the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee (approval no. 10/011). All participants provided written informed consent prior to participation and data collection in the study.

Funding

This study was not supported by any grant.

REFERENCES

Agar, M. (1994). *Language shock: Understanding the culture of conversation*. William Morrow.

Doerr, N. M. (2013). 'I have Māori in me': Shades of commitment and negotiation of subjectivity in an Aotearoa/New Zealand school. *Ethnos, 80*, 168–191. https://doi.org/10.1080/00141844.2013.831940

Erickson, F. (1986). Qualitative methods in research on teaching. In M. C. Wittrock (Ed.), Handbook of research on teaching (3rd ed.) (pp. 119–161). Macmillan.

Feryok, A. (2011, November 29–December 2). *Language teacher cognitions and the role of context: A factor analysis* [Conference presentation]. Applied Linguistics Association of Australia/Applied Linguistics Association of New Zealand Second Combined Conference, Canberra, Australia.

Grice, H. P. (1975/2002). Logic and conversation. In D. J. Levitin (Ed.), *Foundation of cognitive psychology: Core readings* (pp. 719–732.) MIT Press.

Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of the self in everyday life*. Doubleday.

Goffman, E. (1967). On face-work. In E. Goffman (Ed.), *Interaction ritual (pp. 5–45).* Doubleday.

Goffman, E. (1983). Presidential address: The interaction order. *American Sociological Review*, 42, 1–17. https://doi.org/10.2307/2095141

Gumperz, J. (1982). *Discourse strategies.* Cambridge University Press.

Holmes, J. (2018). Negotiating the culture order in New Zealand workplaces. *Language in Society, 47*(3), 3–56. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047404517000732

Hymes, D. (1964). Introduction: Toward ethnographies of communication. *American Anthropologist. 66*(6), 1–34. https://doi.org/10.1525/aa.1964.66suppl_3.02a00010

Kahneman, D. (2011). *Thinking, fast and slow*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Kendi, I. X. *How to be an anti-racist*. One World Penguin Random House.

Moorfield, J. C. (2003–2023). Māori. In *Te Aka Māori Dictionary.* Te Murumāra Foundation. Retrieved from https://maoridictionary.co.nz/search?idiom=&phrase=&proverb=&loan=&histLoanWords=&keywords=Maori

Paringatai, K. (2014). Māori identity development outside of tribal environments. *Aotearoa New Zealand Social Work*, *26*(1), 47–54. https://doi.org/10.11157/anzswj-vol26iss1id54

Rawls, A. W. (1987). The interaction order sui generis: Goffman's contribution to social theory. *Sociological Theory, 5*(2), 136–149. https://doi.org/10.2307/201935

Rawls, A. W. (1989). Language, self, and social order: A reformulation of Goffman and Sacks. *Human Studies, 12*, 147–189. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00142843

Rawls, A. W. (2015). Interaction order: The making of social facts. In E. J. Lawler, S. R. Thye, & J. Yoon (Eds.), *Order on the edge of chaos* (pp. 227–247). Cambridge University Press.

Rawls, A. W. & Duck, W. (2017). "Fractured reflections" of high-status black male presentations of self: Nonrecognition of identity as a "tacit" form of institutional racism. *Sociological Focus, 50*, 36–51. https://doi.org/10.1080/00380237.2016.1218215

StatsNZ/Tatauranga Aotearoa. (n.d.). *New Zealand*. Retrieved from https://www.stats.govt.nz/tools/2018-census-place-summaries/new-zealand#ethnicity-culture-and-identity

Stivers, T. (2008). Stance, alignment, and affiliation during storytelling: When nodding is a token of affiliation. *Research on Language and Social Interaction*, *41*(1), 31–57. https://doi.org/10.1080/08351810701691123

Tannen, D. (1987). Conversational style. In H. W. Dechert & M. Raupach (Eds.), *Psycholinguistic models of production* (pp. 251–267). Ablex.

Tversky, A., & Kahneman, D. (1974). Judgment under uncertainty: Heuristics and biases. *Science*, *185*(4157), 1124–1131. https://doi.org/10.1126/science.185.4157.112

APPENDIX

Transcription Conventions

\+ noticeable pause, no falling intonation

(.) noticeable pause, falling intonation

? rising intonation

: lengthened sound

_ stressed syllable

\- breaking off

/ \ latching, overlaps, interruptions

… omitted words

{} transcriber's comments