

Theme Series

Interaction: Talk and Beyond

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Series Introduction

In this issue of the Journal of Sociolinguistics we introduce what is a new genre for this journal – the Theme Series. Articles on a specific theme will appear in a sequence of issues (not necessarily consecutive) over the course of one to two years. This format aims to create a space to explore fresh perspectives on long-standing challenges, cross disciplines, and open up new avenues in theory and method. The first Series theme is ‘Interaction: Talk and Beyond’, and will run in five issues in 2016-17.

For sociolinguists, interaction is at once fundamentally linguistic and inescapably interdisciplinary. As Goffman observed, “Face-to-face interaction has its own regulations; it has its own processes and its own structure, and these don’t seem to be intrinsically linguistic in character, however often expressed through a linguistic medium” (1964: 136). In dealing with interaction, then, sociolinguists focus on linguistic form but have always known that interaction does more than bring voices into contact. It creates momentary alliances of bodies, strategies, geographies, and various other signals and positionings.

Yet the relationship of these non-verbal systems to talk in progress remains poorly understood. In many cases, research of considerable relevance to sociolinguistics is taking place just beyond its borders. Conversely, insights from the sociolinguistics of interaction often fall outside the scope and attention of neighbouring fields. It is these cross-disciplinary ties of language to other facets of interaction that form the focus of this first Series.

Lorenza Mondada’s article launches the Series with an exploration of the central role of multimodal and embodied processes in conversational interaction. The analysis moves beyond a mere focus on gesture and gaze to consider how the positions and movement of bodies—their ‘mobile ecology’—contributes directly to turns, actions, and sequences of talk. Mondada concludes that such analysis strongly resists reductionism on either side, verbal or visual. The remaining articles in the Series similarly explore elements of the physical and cognitive embedding of spoken interaction, from diverse cross-disciplinary vantage points.

Goffman, Erving. 1964. The neglected situation. *American Anthropologist* 66 (6): 133-6.