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DIANA BOXER, Applying sociolinguistics: Domains and face-to-face interaction.

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DIANA BOXER, *Applying sociolinguistics: Domains and face-to-face interaction*. Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2002. 244 pp. Hb \$108.00, Pb \$47.95.

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This book has many fine qualities, including careful attention to what is meant by APPLYING linguistics as opposed to APPLIED linguistics. The author's goal is to show readers how research findings in micro-sociolinguistic interaction can be applied to several domains of public and private life: family, education, religion, the workplace, cross-cultural encounters, and so on. Application, in this case, involves awareness of subtleties that go unnoticed in face-to-face interaction, particularly those that create or sustain a power imbalance between participants. That awareness, in turn, sets the stage for "transform(ing) the social order" (p. 22, italics omitted) by empowering "individual speakers in their ordinary day-to-day interactions in all spheres of life and in all stages of life" (222). Instead of a social or political agenda, the book suggests in each domain what would constitute more "humane" interaction: stories would be addressed to children, as well as told about them; collaborative ways of speaking associated primarily with women would be given more status in the workplace and used more often by both women and men; gatekeepers who deal with international students (and other U.S. Americans who interact with speakers for whom English is a second language) would be more sensitive to the potential for face threat to arise from misunderstanding.

The book's format is original and extremely useful. It begins with a detailed introduction of Joshua Fishman's notion of domains and a discussion of various research methods used in sociolinguistics. Each domain is described with a review of research in the area, followed by a case study of particular interaction practices relevant to the domain. In family interaction, for example, the case study is about nagging; in the workplace domain, about male banter and boasting in a stockbroker's office. The scope of the literature reviewed for this volume is staggering, given that there are decades of research within each domain from several different disciplines – anthropology, sociology, communication, and education, beyond the many subfields of linguistics relevant to these topics. The

writing is accessible and articulate without being oversimplified. Both the reviews and the case studies are detailed and sophisticated in their presentation. There are fine, original insights offered throughout the book. Summing up a convincing exploration of the gendered attribution of the speech act of nagging, for example, Boxer notes: "In a world of cooperation women may expect compliance with reasonable requests; nevertheless, when confronted with the hierarchical style of boys and men, it just does not work. Requests need to become repeated reminders that turn into nagging." In the chapter on social interaction, she draws from previously published work to describe teasing as enabling bonding, which can nonetheless take a negative turn and progress from a "nip" to a "bite." Observations such as these both deepen respect for the analytic ear at work here and make for compelling reading.

One perhaps forgivable bias is the consistent focus on the effects of gender on interaction, with relatively little mention of other aspects of identity that are just as significant, such as class, age, and race. It is clear from this book that Boxer's previous work has concentrated on gender, and there is a great deal of research on that particular power imbalance, further justifying this emphasis. As broad as this book is already, it would not have been productive to try to give equal coverage to other dimensions of identity in their influence on social interaction. A more thorough justification of why gender is privileged to the extent that it is, however, seems called for.

The primary utility of this volume is as a textbook for advanced undergraduates and graduate students. It could fit well into courses on various aspects of linguistics, intercultural communication, and the area of language and social interaction as addressed by various disciplines. Students will find the book instructive in many ways. The contrasts between research methods offered in the introduction, and the references to and illustrations of those in the case studies, make it an excellent starting place for student projects in areas that will interest a great many of them. The literature reviews give manageable starting places for grounding such research projects in a variety of disciplinary conversations. The observations of subtle power imbalances in everyday conversational practices are worthwhile starting points for class discussions of students' own experiences in those arenas. The domains themselves are undeniably important and relevant, and will be persuasive evidence of the importance of micro level analysis of social life.

There are, however, limitations of the work that make it less useful as a scholarly resource. First, although one of the fields the book claims to draw from, and attempts to speak to, is communication, much relevant research from the field of communication is absent. To say that no one has studied couples' interaction, for example, is to overlook Mandelbaum 1987, Hopper and Drummond 1990, and many that have followed their lead. Ethnographic work in communication studies would have helped illustrate the contextual dimension described repeatedly as definitive of this approach. Studies conducted in organizational contexts

(Ashcraft 1999, Cheney 1999, and others) would have contributed, for example, to the discussion of workplace interaction, as communication research focused on culture and intercultural contact (Carbaugh 1996, Lindsley 1999, Schely-Newman 1999) would have added to the chapter on cross-cultural interaction.

Second, although the ethnographic perspective described in the introduction is linked specifically to Hymesian ethnography of speaking, the case studies that claim to use ethnographic methods are generic qualitative efforts rather than accurately reflecting that particular tradition of research. The “ethnography of speaking” approach to conversational joking, for example, seems to refer (73) to practices of audiotaping conversations and collecting fieldnotes in naturally occurring situations. There is no specification of the group of people studied, nor even a sense that a particular group was the focus of study. There is also no attempt to specify any of the particulars of conversational joking among the people whose conversations were taped or observed. The description of joking and teasing, then, although intriguing and undoubtedly quite accurate in its representation of the interactions studied, is not in any way linked to patterns of interaction within any group, setting, or kind of event. The analysis centers on defining the characteristics of those two speech acts vis-à-vis previous research, rather than on the organic experience of a group of people. Similarly, despite framing the case study of gatekeeping encounters in an international office as “ethnography of speaking (Hymes 1962),” (196) there are no details about the particular international office other than its location at a large U.S. university and the fact that over half of the international student population at this university is Asian. There is no sense of a speech community under study, a defining feature of Hymesian ethnography since its inception.

A related problem is that the data analysis, though sometimes well developed and cogent, is in other places quite thin. A case study involving bar and bat mitzvahs, for example, which might have been truly ethnographic, reveals few profound cultural norms and explores the symbolism of the ritual at a fairly superficial level. For example, a moment in a bat mitzvah which sounds as if it would be particularly rich with meaning and feeling is presented thus:

The segment in which the Torah was carried around the perimeter of the congregation celebrates the fact that the community has a Torah. It is a joyous segment. Aligned with this joyous feeling, the sub-event was an opportunity for the audience to begin to greet each other, converse, and generally talk to each other. The social aspect of the service was once again evident. (139)

Talk about what? Who talked to whom? Why is having a Torah something for the community to celebrate? How, verbally and nonverbally, is the moment made “joyous”? The analytic move at the end of the chapter essentially concludes that bar and bat mitzvahs are interactions within a religious domain, that such interactions are very important and meaningful to the people who participate in them, and that such domains are more significant to U.S. Americans than previous

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research has acknowledged. This lack of detail, unfortunately recurrent in other chapters, is disappointing for the researcher already involved in studies of interaction hoping to add what are clearly rich, unique case studies to the collection of such resources available for theory-building.

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ROBERTA FACCHINETTI, MANFRED KRUG, & FRANK PALMER (eds.), *Modality in contemporary English*. Topics in English Linguistics 44. Berlin & New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 2003. Pp. xvi, 396. Hb. \$132.30.

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This volume is a collection of sixteen papers, mainly arising from a conference in Verona, Italy, in 2001. There is a nine-page preface, though no concluding section, by the editors. The preface is mostly devoted to summaries of the individual chapters, except for an initial introduction of about one page. In it the editors aver that “all of these papers offer fresh methodological impetus to a variety of current linguistic debates” but also refer to “differences in theoretical perspectives, terminology and topics.” Differences in topics are of course desirable, but differences in core terminology are less so. An attempt on the part of the editors to comment on differences in terminology in studies on modality in general, or at least in those of the present volume, would have been welcome and might have enhanced the “methodological impetus” of which the editors speak. It would also have increased the interest of the volume for the reader wishing to