

1 Introduction

Conversation consists of much more than alternating turns at talk: rather, it is a collaborative, endeavour which requires participants to engage actively as both ‘speakers’ and ‘listeners’ in the sequential construction of an interaction. Listenership therefore involves much more than simply being a passive recipient of what the current speaker is saying: it means taking an active part in the ongoing construction of the interaction. This is empirically observable in the way listeners use a variety of verbal responses and non-verbal cues, as well as in the pragmatic use of silence and pauses, all of which can vary in frequency, distribution and intensity to fulfil a complex array of interactive, epistemic and social functions.

Supportive verbal feedback takes many forms, ranging from brief vocalisations such as laughter, minimal responses such as *mhmm* and *yeah* and other brief expressions of overt or implicit support or agreement, through to longer sequences of various sorts, including backchannel utterances and cooperative overlaps. Verbal feedback occurs regularly and frequently in all types of conversational interaction, closely aligned with non-verbal signals such as gestures, head nods, facial expression and gaze, and is a primary resource for engaging in active listenership. At a minimum these devices serve to signal the listener’s alignment with the current interactional activity, but they may also help to construct more substantive forms of involvement and affiliation between interlocutors.

Using tools from conversation analysis, interactional sociolinguistics and pragmatics, analysts of spoken discourse have developed an increasingly sophisticated understanding of how verbal listener responses function in their sequential context (e.g. Bublitz 1988; Coates 1989; Farr 2003; Gardner 1997, 1998, 2001, 2007; Jefferson 1984, 1993, 2002; McCarthy 2003; Norrick 2011; Orestrom 1983; Schegloff 1982; Schffrin 1987; Stenstrom 1987, 1994; Stivers 2004, 2008; Stubbe 1994, 1998; Ward & Tsukahara 2000, 2003; Xudong 2008). More recently, with the increasing availability of video corpora and analytic tools, the focus of interest has widened further to encompass micro-level multimodal analysis of active listenership, specifically the fine articulation between verbal responses and non-verbal cues (e.g. Carter & Adolphs 2008; Knight & Adolphs 2008; Stivers 2008).

The focus of this chapter is on gendered patterns of variation in the use of supportive verbal feedback in a sample of conversational data from the Wellington Corpus of Spoken New Zealand English (WSC).¹ The original analysis of this data was carried out between 1995 and 1998 as part of a wider-ranging study of pragmatic variation in New Zealand English discourse. An analytic framework for the classification of supportive verbal feedback in corpus data was developed by the author as part of this project (see section 3), and was subsequently applied to a quantitative and qualitative analysis of ethnic and gender variation in a matched sub-sample of the WSC (see Stubbe 1996; Holmes & Stubbe 1997; Stubbe 1998).²

¹ The Wellington Corpus of Spoken New Zealand English consists of one million words of spoken New Zealand English made up of speech excerpts of 2000-2500 words. All contributors are speakers of New Zealand English, from a representative range of gender, age, and social and ethnic backgrounds (Holmes, Vine & Johnson 1998). See Sigley (Chapter X, this volume) for an overview of the text-category markup of this corpus.

² This chapter provides a more detailed account of the gender component of this previous analysis than has been published previously, including some previously unpublished results, and draws on relevant material in later publications by the author and colleagues (e.g. Stubbe 1999, 2003; Stubbe, Holmes, Vine & Marra 2001; Stubbe,

A brief overview of the relevant literature on gender and verbal feedback in conversation is provided next. The rest of the chapter exemplifies one possible approach to analysing variation in the use of complex interactive discourse variables using corpus data. Section 3 provides an updated account of the classification framework for analyzing supportive verbal feedback referred to above, followed by discussion of the methods and results of the gender variation analysis in section 4.

2 Gendered speech styles and the use of verbal feedback

Research on gender and language use in Western, English-speaking societies has consistently reported women to be generally more facilitative, cooperative conversationalists than men (e.g. Aries 1976; Coates 1996; 1998, 2003, 2004; Crawford 1995; Holmes 1995, 2006; Holmes & Meyerhoff 2003; Johnson & Meinhof 1997; Romaine 1999; Talbot 1998; Tannen 1990, 1993, 1994; Wertheim, Bailee & Corston-Oliver 1998; Wodak 1997). In particular, it has been claimed that women are more active listeners in the sense that they are more likely to use conversational strategies, including supportive verbal feedback or response tokens, which support the smooth progress of an interaction and facilitate others' opportunities to speak.

Much of the early work in this area focused on quantifiable gender differences in the use of closed sets of linguistic devices which were assumed to generically index putative 'competitive' or 'facilitative' conversational styles. To begin with, these styles were often positioned as polar opposites, though, as discussed further below, the argument was increasingly made that in reality such differences were indicative of a distributional gendered style continuum which could be drawn on by both men and women in different settings (e.g. Cameron 1995, 1997; Bing & Bergvall 1996; Stubbe et al 2001; Coates 2004). This early quantitative work largely predated the era of widespread access to large computerised corpora, and thus typically involved the manual coding and counting of formally defined categories of features such as interruptions or minimal feedback tokens in relatively small, purposively collected sets of naturally occurring or elicited interactions. One marker assumed to index the more co-operative interactive style associated with women was a greater use of supportive minimal response tokens such as *mhmm*, *mm*, and *yeah*.

Many studies (though not all) reported that women tended to use more minimal responses than men to signal their involvement or to encourage others to contribute and keep talking (e.g., Dittman 1972; Fishman 1983; Gilbert 1990; Hirschman 1974; Hyndman 1985; Leet-Pellegrini 1980; Munro 1987; Nordenstam 1992; Roger 1989; Reid 1995; Strodtbeck & Mann 1956; Stubbe 1978; Zimmerman & West 1975). However, such analyses took little account of potentially confounding variables such as text and activity type or topic (see below), or of the often complex interrelationship between the range of possible forms and the different actions they can be used to perform 'online' in the local context of the discourse. These studies were also often flawed from a statistical standpoint due to the interactive nature of the variables being examined. For example, the frequency of feedback responses produced is obviously co-dependent on other variables such as the relative amount of talk produced by each speaker, and the degree to which each speaker holds the floor. It is not surprising therefore that subsequent research showed the relative frequency of minimal responses to provide at best only a very crude measure of interactional supportiveness by listeners, whatever their gender.

Lane, Hilder, E.Vine, B.Vine, Holmes, Marra & Weatherall 2003; Stubbe & Holmes 1995, 2000; Holmes & Stubbe 1992, 2003; H 2003; Holmes, Stubbe & Marra 2003).

From the early 1980s a number of researchers using a more action-oriented or functional analytic framework began to identify patterns of gender difference in the use of open-ended categories of facilitative verbal feedback. These included sentence completions, echoes, cooperative overlapping and other longer comments or questions which appeared to indicate active listening or intense involvement. Several studies found that such responses tended to occur in less formal contexts where a 'one-at-a-time' model of turn taking (c.f. Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson 1974) is not strictly adhered to by participants. For example, Edelsky (1981) demonstrated that American women's participation in faculty meetings increased during "collaborative floor" sections of the interaction, while Nordenstam (1992:84) reported that Swedish women talking to one another used a more varied and elaborated range of backchannel signals which were often more "emotionally charged" (e.g. *det var ju fantastiskt* – 'that's incredible'). Other researchers have observed that women often prefer collaboratively constructed "all-together-now" talk, especially when exchanging personal stories or gossiping with close friends (Coates 1989, 1998, 2004; Pilkington 1994, 1998).

Researchers also began to put forward evidence suggesting women and men may use and interpret simple minimal responses such as *mhmm* somewhat differently. For instance, Maltz & Borker (1982) claimed that men were more likely than women to interpret a simple minimal response as implying agreement, and Fishman observed that women in heterosexual couples were "particularly skilled at inserting *mms*, *yeahs*, *ohs* and other such comments throughout streams of talk rather than at the end", very precisely timed to fall between the breaths of the speaker (1983:96). Reid Thomas (1995) noted a relationship between gender and the timing and intonation of simple minimal responses, and a tendency for women's responses to be interpreted more often than men's as meaning *I'm listening* versus *I agree*. Fellego (1995) reported that different usage or distributional rules were assigned to minimal responses by the Anglo-American men and women in her sample: even though overall frequencies were very similar, the women spread minimal responses more evenly throughout the speaker's utterance than the men, who tended to load up their responses at the ends of syntactic units.

More recent work on language and gender has increasingly questioned the value of earlier quantitative research which was conducted predominantly within a 'gender difference' paradigm. This tended to be based on an essentialist assumption of consistent gendered differences in language behaviour, regardless of the context and purpose of the communicative event, or the locally occasioned contingencies of talk-in-interaction. Since the mid-1990s many language and gender researchers (myself included) increasingly moved away from formally based quantitative approaches to more nuanced qualitative analyses of how people use a range of interactional resources to 'perform' or construct gender identities as they talk within gendered communities of practice (e.g. Bergvall 1999; Bing & Bergvall 1996; Cameron 1997, 2003; Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 1999, 2003, 2007; Freed 2003; Holmes & Meyerhoff 2003; Holmes & Stubbe 2003; McElhinney & Mills 2007; Stubbe 1998; Talbot 2003; Weatherall 2002).

As Cheshire (2002:439) points out, "not all women prefer affective meanings, or speak in a cooperative speech style; and ... those who do, do not always do so. The same applies to men and their apparent preference for referential meanings; and to (other) patterns of sex differentiation". In other words, pre-determined social categories like 'men' and 'women' are not simple homogeneous groupings, any more than other common intergroup comparisons. The reality is that the communicative behaviours observed in any particular interaction result from a complex interaction between the socio-cultural norms associated with the enactment of various social roles and identities (of which gender may not be the most salient) and other situated aspects of the encounter. The specific requirements of the context or type of talk in

which speakers are engaged are likely to influence the use of particular features at least as much as an individual's 'performance' of gender or other aspects of social identity, and *intra*-sex differences in communicative behaviour are thus likely to be at least as great as any *inter*-sex differences. Insofar as generalisations in terms of sex or gender are possible at all, therefore, it is important to take account of overlaps between women's and men's behaviour as well as any actual or presumed differentiation (Freed & Greenwood 1996).

The use of verbal feedback is highly contingent on the local context and the sequential organisation of the interaction at the point where it occurs. While it is impractical to micro-analyse each interaction in a corpus sample to determine the effect of context line by line, more macro-level contextual indicators such as text type have frequently been commented on in relation to gender and the use of feedback, and provide a useful starting point for exploring the part played by the discursive context. For example, Coates (1989, 1996) found that the frequency and discourse functions of feedback responses in women's conversation varied systematically according to whether the participants were engaged in "interaction-focused" talk (where no one speaker has primary responsibility for the development of the topic), or "information-focused" talk such as narrative or descriptive sequences with a single "topical speaker" (West & Garcia, 1988). Coates found that in information-focused talk, listener responses were used less frequently but in specific ways, for example to signal agreement to a topic shift, or to mark active agreement with a speaker's summing up. In these text types the immediate involvement of the listener in the development of the topic is less. Moreover, narratives in particular are characterised by long turns which need to be negotiated initially by the speaker, but then require less regular localised feedback from the listener than is the case in other more dialogic text types.

The topic being discussed has also been shown to influence the degree and nature of listener involvement. For example in a New Zealand study comparing gossip and non-gossip texts, Pilkington (1994, 1998) found that, when gossiping, both sexes shifted to a relatively 'high-involvement' style, characterised in part by higher use of overtly supportive minimal responses and cooperative overlaps. However, Pilkington found that men and women were not equally likely to select the same feedback strategies, and also had different frequency baselines. For instance, when gossiping, men showed a preference for supportive minimal responses to signal high involvement, while women used more overlaps; however, the women's baseline rate of cooperative overlap use in general conversation was equivalent to that of men engaged in gossip.

Earlier research has also consistently reported that men and women tend to discuss different types of topics (Kalcik 1975; Aries 1976; Haas & Sherman 1982; Aries & Johnson 1983; James & Drakich 1993; Tannen 1990; Coates 1989, 1996, 2003). In same-sex settings women tend to talk more often about personal feelings and interpersonal relationships, and about intimate topics and daily activities, whereas men tend to speak less about themselves, their feelings or their relationships with others, and more about shared activities such as sports and hobbies. Because such topics pose potential threats to both speaker's and listener's face, it is predictable that they would be associated with a more frequent use of affectively supportive listener feedback and other addressee-oriented pragmatic devices such as *you know* which function both to encourage and support contributions by other participants in an interaction, and to convey solidarity and shared understanding. Clearly, if women talk more than men about personal topics, and if such topics as a rule generate relatively more high-involvement feedback regardless of listener gender, then it is reasonable to predict that women in a representative corpus will produce a higher proportion of explicitly supportive feedback than men (assuming otherwise comparable discourse contexts).

More recent research in this area has tended to embrace a post-modernist or social constructionist paradigm which problematises the use of predetermined 'essentialist' social categories such as gender and the decontextualised classification and analysis of linguistic features. Nevertheless, as Cameron (1995) points out, much of the earlier gender difference research was well-conceived and carefully executed, with a pattern of results that has proved to be remarkably robust over time. What has principally changed is the way in which such patterns are now interpreted. As such, this earlier body of work continues to provide a useful and relevant starting point for analysing gender patterns in corpus data, with the important proviso that the complexities of precisely how discourse features such as listener responses function in context must be taken fully into account when interpreting the results. This point is explored further in the next section.

3 Developing a workable analytic framework

This section describes a taxonomy of supportive verbal feedback devices derived from an exploratory analysis of 1800 listener responses in 22 dyadic conversations and radio interviews from the WSC (see Stubbe 1996, 1998), and explains its underlying theoretical rationale. This analysis built on the conclusions drawn from the research reviewed above; namely, that the definition of what constitutes a supportive feedback device should include more extended feedback like cooperative overlapping and sentence completions as well as simple minimal responses, and that it would be instructive to look more closely both at the functions and patterns of placement or distribution of feedback responses in relation to patterns of variation. The resulting model was used to classify and quantify gender patterns in the use of listener feedback for the subsample analysis described in section 4 below.

The data for the initial exploratory study came from the informal speech section of the WSC. This constitutes 75% of the overall corpus, while 50% of the corpus is private face-to-face conversations (DPC) collected using the 'friend of a friend' method. The WSC overall is roughly representative in terms of gender: women contributed 52% and men 48% of the final transcribed words, reflecting the New Zealand population balance. However, the WSC does not include representative samples from particular ethnic groups other than the indigenous Māori people. In respect to other social variables, there is a bias towards the 20-30 year age band in the DPC data category, and the conversation participants are much more likely to be university-educated than the general New Zealand population at the time (Holmes, Vine & Johnson 1998).³ The sample analysed for the exploratory study comprised approximately 50,000 running words in total, with 44 participants representing two age bands (16-34, 40-55), two ethnic groups (36 Pakeha, 8 Māori), and an even split of men and women. Because only audio-taped data was available, non-verbal feedback was not studied.

3.1 Defining verbal feedback

Analysis in context of the 1800 listener responses identified in the exploratory analysis highlighted the sheer complexity and range of the interactional resources available to listeners. As with other complex discourse variables, listener responses are not bound to a closed set of forms, and the 'meanings' or actions performed by these utterances are, by definition, co-constructed and contingent on the local sequential context. This makes it challenging to reliably categorise these phenomena for the purposes of a variationist discourse analysis of

³ Of individuals with completed background information sheets in WSC conversations, 32.9% had a university degree, compared with 8.5% of the New Zealand population in the 1996 census.

corpus data (see also Pichler 2010).

The following excerpt from the WSC exemplifies just a few of the interactional devices listeners may draw on to actively involve themselves in a conversation while an interlocutor holds the floor, and provides some indication of the complexity with which these devices function interactively. It is also a canonical example of the collaborative ‘high involvement’ listening style often associated with women in the language and gender research of the late twentieth century, as discussed above. (Supportive verbal feedback devices are shown in bold).⁴

(1) Supportive verbal feedback

DPC283 (extract from section of text not included in WSC).

Context: A woman tells her friend about a botched hair dying job

- 1 Mona: [laughs] so this is really silly 'cause the hair's white okay
2 //they muck it up so i end up red + in a couple of months i've got to go back\ +
3 Carol: /**[laughs]**\\
4 Carol: **[laughs]: have it str-**=/
5 Mona: /=**they'd strip streaks** of the red strip it right back to white but
6 don't do it she said don't do the whole head
7 Carol: **[laughs] streak it white** //**[laughs]**\
8 Mona: //**streak bits of it white**\ and then eventually the red will grow
9 out and fade and the white will dominate but it's going to take months
10 Carol: **yeah**
11 Mona: that's why i want to get it back to something close to normal and i've got my niece's
12 wedding to go to in //december\ so i'm going to go down in posterity=
13 Carol: //**oh no**\\
14 Mona: =in the family photographs as a //redhead **[laughs]**\
15 Carol: //**[laughs]** // **oh dear + hmm**
16 Mona: still mark thinks it's lovely
17 Carol: **does he**=/
18 Mona: /=**oh yes**
19 Carol: **oohh // + oohh [quietly]: how could he:**\
20 Mona: /i think it's a real sexist thing i think he thinks it makes me look\
21 you know a lot younger and **[laughs]** therefore it might make him look a little bit younger
22 if i'm //with him i think that's the reasoning\
23 Carol: //**[drawls]: oh gosh: **
24 **aren't they pathetic**
25 Mona: **[laughs] they are yes [laughs]**

In this example, Carol listens sympathetically to Mona's account of a recent disastrous visit to the hairdresser to have her hair dyed. As narrator, Mona mostly holds the floor, but Carol too is actively participating in the conversation. At appropriate points in the narrative, she laughs along with Mona (L3, L4, L7, L15); provides supportive minimal responses – *yeah* (L10), *oh no* (L13), *oh gosh* (L23), *oh dear* and *hmm* (L15); quietly interpolates longer ‘backchannel’ comments- *have it str-* (L4), *oohh + oohh how could he* (L19); partially echoes Mona's words in L5 “*strip streaks ...right back to white*” with *streak it white* (L7); and asks facilitative (rhetorical) questions which function as aligning evaluations - *does he* (L17), *aren't they pathetic* (L24).

Without ever taking the floor as such, Carol thus indicates in various ways that the story has her active attention and interest, and encourages Mona to continue telling it. At the same time, the finely nuanced choices she makes about the type, placement and intensity of verbal feedback she

⁴ See Appendix for transcription conventions. All names used in examples are pseudonyms.

provides add a complex layering of additional meanings. She can be heard to express her sympathy with and understanding of Mona's plight, and humorously reinforces shared aspects of their friendship and social identity (e.g. gender, age, life experience) by reflecting and extending further Mona's attitude of mock exasperation with her male partner. Mona in turn weaves reciprocal feedback to Carol into her own narrative by projecting possible completions, echoing or responding to Carol's laughter and other supportive comments, often in overlap with Carol: *they'd strip streaks* (L5), *streak bits of it white* (L8), *oh yes* (L18), *i think it's a real sexist thing...*(L20), *they are yes* (L25). On hearing the excerpt, one is also struck by the rapidity and precision timing with which these various listener responses are interpolated into the stream of talk, including latched utterances⁵ (L4-5, L17-18), and the echoes and overlaps deployed by both participants as they co-construct the discourse (e.g. L5-8, L19-20, L 22-23).

This example highlights some important observations about verbal feedback in conversation. First, all supportive listener responses typically share a basic interactive function of aligning with the current activity (Stivers 2008) in that they "appear to ratify or otherwise contribute to the talk of a current speaker" (Zimmerman & West, 1975: 104) and confirm that speaker and listener share a common frame of reference without threatening the current speaker's floor holding. Neither minimal responses nor more extended backchannels are generally heard as interruptions or as separate turns at talk (Coates, 1989, 2004; Edelsky 1981; Tannen 1984).

Second, listener responses may convey several levels of meaning simultaneously: minimal responses in particular "punch above their weight" in terms of their interactional importance (McCarthy 2003). For instance, as we saw in Example 1, supportive responses can provide an explicit warrant for a long turn to continue (Coates 1989; Schegloff 1993) and may also function to pass back the floor in cases where the speaker has yielded the turn, or as a polite means of "booking" a turn at talk (Stubbe 1994). "Topicalising utterances" (West and Garcia 1988) or "news receipts" (Maynard & Frankel 2006) such as *really* or *oh yeah* play an important part in ongoing topic development and maintenance, while jointly constructed minimal response sequences are regularly used to formally close down a topic (Filipi & Wales 2003; West 2006). At a referential level, verbal feedback allows listeners to display indirectly their own knowledge or competence within the domain of action to which the topic relates. It can also indicate the listener's stance towards what is being said by indexing a wide range of epistemic meanings from relative indifference or doubt, through simple affirmation to enthusiastic interest and agreement (Bublitz 1988; Gardner 2001, 2005; Stenstrom 1994; Stubbe 1994). In addition, listener feedback can be used to express supportive/affiliative relational meanings, ranging from simple acknowledgment of an interlocutor's feelings to explicit expressions of sympathy, interest, surprise, or enthusiasm.

Third, the forms and functions of listener responses are not in a one-to-one relationship. Listeners have a wide range of possible feedback devices to select from, and can produce, combine and distribute these strategically in many different ways according to the context. The precise 'meaning' or interactional effect of such utterances is thus subject to conversational inference, and is highly contingent on how an interaction unfolds turn by turn.

Moreover, although feedback is a ubiquitous feature of conversation in all languages, the specific meanings that may be inferred from different forms, baseline frequencies or distribution of listener feedback and the levels or types of feedback considered appropriate in particular contexts, have been shown to vary widely across cultures (see Stubbe 1998 for a

⁵ The term 'latched utterance' is used here in a structural sense to refer to turns which follow-on with no discernible gap or intervening pause between utterances.

more detailed discussion). For example, the typical Finn is a silent listener by comparison with members of many other European ethnolinguistic groups: verbal feedback occurs infrequently, and interruption and overlaps are generally considered unacceptable (Lehtonen & Sajavaara 1985). Japanese speakers on the other hand are reported to have a relatively high baseline for verbal backchannelling; this has been linked to the cultural value of *omoiyari* which places great value on the creation and maintenance of harmonious interaction (Hayashi 1988; White 1989). Xudong (2008) studied the use of listener responses in Mandarin Chinese and Australian English conversations, and found a number of differences in frequency, types and the positioning of listener responses. Chinese speakers used fewer listener responses, used more paralinguistic vocalic forms rather than lexical items, and were more likely to place their listener responses during a turn. New Zealand Māori,⁶ in common with other Pacific cultures, also place great importance on the creation of involvement and solidarity in informal discourse (White & Watson-Gegeo 1990; Britain 1992); however, in contrast with Japanese interactions, Māori conversationalists place a strong reliance on non-verbal cues and implicit reference in preference to the use of explicit verbal feedback (Metge & Kinloch 1984; Britain 1992; Stubbe 1998; Holmes & Stubbe 2000).

Finally, it is important to note that verbal feedback does not always function supportively as in this excerpt. Listeners have been reported to use both delayed feedback and minimal responses rather than full turns at talk as strategies for avoiding further participation in a conversation or to shut down discussion of a topic (Zimmerman & West, 1975; Fishman, 1983). Listener responses may also be used to indirectly signal impatience (Stivers 2004) and disagreement or doubt (Stubbe 1994). Bublitz (1988:184) observes that because minimal responses such as *mm* can be inserted almost anywhere in the stream of talk, they are also an excellent device for “pretending to listen”, while extended sequences of simultaneous speech may just as readily be intended (or perceived) to interrupt an interlocutor’s turn as to function as a cooperative overlap or projected completion (Tannen 1990). Any analysis of verbal feedback cannot therefore rely on formal features alone but must take account of the localized contingent nature of spoken interaction.

3.2 The supportive feedback continuum

Three main dimensions of variation in how listeners provided supportive verbal feedback were identified in the exploratory analysis:

- 1) the *type* of feedback device (defined by lexical, paralinguistic and interactional features)
- 2) the *frequency* and *distribution* of feedback responses
- 3) the *placement* of feedback in relation to the current speaker’s utterances.

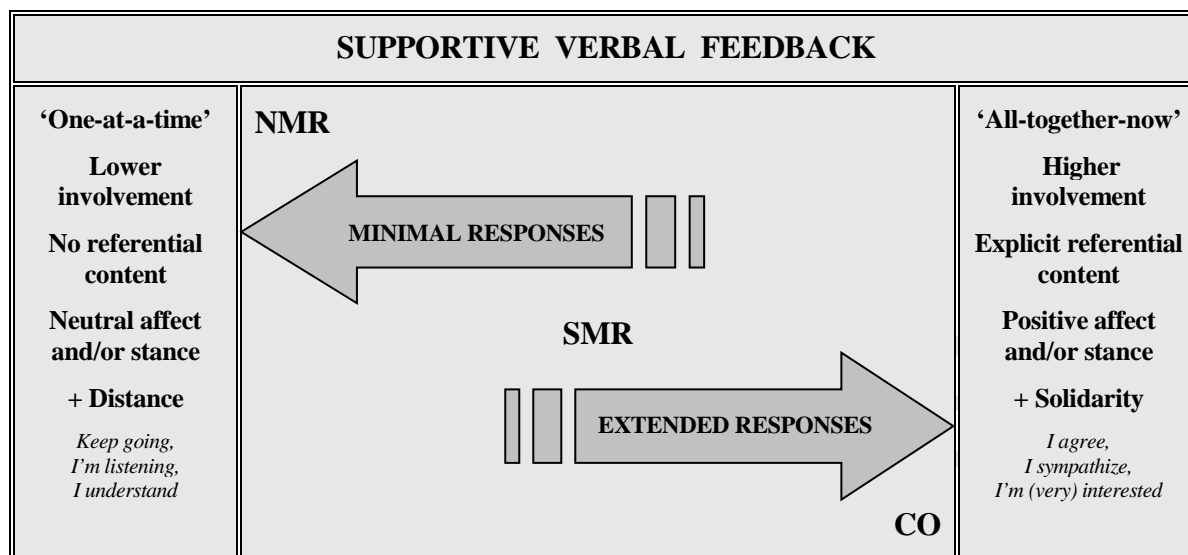
These variables were observed to interact in complex ways as resources for producing a range of meanings particular to the local discourse context. The overall conclusion was that listener responses are most appropriately characterised as a relatively open class of multi-functional utterances operating along a continuum or “backchannel gradient” (cf. Stenstrom 1994: 81) reflecting the nature and degree of joint involvement in the interaction,⁷ the degree of explicit referential or affective support provided by the listener, and the degree of social distance or

⁶ The Māori people are New Zealand’s original Polynesian inhabitants comprising about 15% of the population. *Pakeha* is a Māori word used widely in New Zealand English to refer to people of European (mainly British) descent; this is the dominant cultural/ethnic grouping in New Zealand.

⁷ More recently, Norrick (2011) has made the related observation that more “insistent” response tokens that function as assessments or challenges (e.g. *wow*, *really*) will often elicit further responses in their own right, unlike less “obtrusive” responses such as *uh-huh*, and proposes that listener responses could also usefully be ranked along a scale of obtrusiveness or insistency.

solidarity (Stubbe 1991, 1994, 1998). (See Figure 1).

FIGURE 1: The supportive verbal feedback continuum



This provides a flexible system (both culturally and situationally relative), that allows listeners to take an active role in influencing the topical development and interactional structure of a conversation, as well as to convey a wide range of social and affective meanings. Available responses range from providing the minimum amount of interactional feedback compatible with sustaining the conversation, right through to the joint construction of the discourse. At the affective and propositional levels, a listener response may simply be a neutral attention signal, or it may carry a greater or lesser degree of positive referential or affective meaning, such as confirming or agreeing with another speaker's statement of fact or opinion, or explicitly expressing empathy and interest in what is being said. Such strategies can function simultaneously to encourage and support contributions by other participants in an interaction, and to convey solidarity and shared understanding.

Listeners are thus able to vary the type, placement and distribution of the feedback responses in a way that allows them to meet their conversational goals in particular contexts. Particular devices or forms are also multi-functional, both in the sense that they can perform different actions according to the context, and also in their ability to function on more than one level simultaneously. Because the precise meaning constructed by a given feedback device is always subject to contextual inference, there can be no strict correspondence between form and function. It is nonetheless possible to make some general observations about how the various devices available to listeners tend to function in relation to one another. The supportive feedback continuum as represented in Figure 1 provides a useful way of conceptualising this complex interaction between the range of forms and functions observed in this data.

3.3 Types of feedback

The choices a listener makes between minimal or extended response forms on the one hand, and between affectively or propositionally neutral or explicitly supportive responses on the other,

both have implications for how listener responses function in context. The analysis distinguished three main categories of verbal feedback: neutral minimal responses (NMRs), explicitly supportive minimal responses (SMRs) and cooperative overlaps (COs). These three types of feedback are defined and exemplified next.

3.3.1 Neutral minimal responses (NMRs)

To the left of the continuum are brief minimal responses which can be heard as interactionally supportive, but which are affectively and referentially neutral in tone. Typical functions of such neutral minimal responses might include signalling attention, understanding, a willingness to keep listening, or the negotiation of a topic shift. NMRs are basically heard as an acknowledgement or continuation signal, although they may sometimes imply a secondary meaning of tacit agreement or reserving judgement. Example 2 illustrates the kinds of responses classified as NMRs: these are drawn from a very small closed set of lexical items such as *mm*, *uh-huh*, *yeah*, *okay* and variants (c.f. Hirschman 1974; Fishman 1983; Schegloff 1982; Jefferson 1984). They sound prosodically and lexically unmarked, are characterised by mid to low pitch, fairly level intonation and relatively low volume, and are usually placed at the boundary of a syntactic or tone unit (i.e. a transition relevance point (TRP) as defined originally by Sacks et al, 1974). It is quite possible for a listener to utter such neutral minimal responses more or less automatically and still appear attentive (Bublitz 1988).

(2) Neutral minimal responses (NMRs)

DPC317 1030-1055

Context: Two male colleagues discuss a television programme.

Tama: well er the catholic bishops' conference has made statements on homosexuality
and so on //and\ um have taken into account //i i know\
Eru: /mm\
Tama: what er Māori opinion is for Māori catholics
Eru: mm

3.3.2 Supportive minimal responses (SMRs)

Along the continuum to the right are verbal responses which are still minimal in form, but which are heard as more emotionally and epistemically charged. SMRs are more differentiated in function or actions performed, expressing meanings such as sympathy, interest, surprise, and explicit or enthusiastic agreement (c.f. Nordenstam 1992; Pilkington 1994, 1998; Stenstrom 1994; Stubbe 1994, 1998; Reid 1995). Listeners typically achieve this by clustering several neutral minimal responses together in quick succession, or by using prosodically marked minimal response forms which can be heard as being explicitly supportive in some way. SMRs can be realised by a wide range of short utterances including explicit agreement markers and minimal responses like *mm*, *uh-huh*, which are marked paralinguistically by extended pitch span, raised voice range and higher volume and/or by rapid repetition. While SMRs also function in an aligning way as an acknowledgement or continuer, they simultaneously signal an explicitly supportive affective or positively valenced evaluative meaning of some sort along a continuum of 'strength'. Excerpt 3 provides an illustration of the forms and placement typical of this response category.

(3) Supportive minimal responses (SMRs)

DPC283 (extract from section of text not included in WSC)

Context: Two female friends discuss a botched hair-dying job

- 1 Mona: so whether I have to go back and get one of these colour bath things //done\ every four weeks=
2 Carol: /oh gee\
3 Mona: =i don't know but i- and i don't know how much that will cost
4 Carol: yeah
5 Mona: so that's the annoying thing //all i'm asking them for is a refund\
6 Carol: /precisely ++ yeah\
7 Mona: fo- for the original amount i //spent there\ and if they're not careful i'll take them to=
8 Carol: /exactly\
9 Mona: =the small claims tribunal and ask for maintenance money as well

In this excerpt, Carol uses SMRs four times in quick succession to construct an affiliative stance, to demonstrate her active attention to and interest in Mona's story, and to signal her continued willingness to be in the listener role as Mona continues with her extended narrative. In L1 she expresses emphatic surprise with *oh gee*, produced in overlap. When Mona finishes her turn in L3, Carol produces *yeah* with a similar intonation contour, which constructs it as an explicitly affiliative response while at the same time functioning as a continuer. Mona then renews her narrative thread, marking the transition to the upshot of her narrative with *so*. Carol's next SMRs in L6 (*precisely ++ yeah*) and L8 (*exactly*) are designed as explicit agreements with Mona's stated position, with the positively valenced lexical choices boosted by the prosodic features, and in the case of L6, by the addition of the post-posed *yeah*.

3.3.3 Cooperative overlaps

Listeners may also signal high involvement or solidarity with more extended feedback of various types, referred to here collectively as cooperative overlaps. This term, as used here, includes brief interjections, sentence completions, echoes and repetitions, through to more extended segments of simultaneous or actually overlapping speech which may include paraphrases, comments, elaborations and questions.⁸ These usually align and/or affiliate with the content of the other speaker's utterance in some way, and are sometimes followed by an indication of support from the primary speaker. Like minimal responses, cooperative overlaps seem to function along a continuum of lesser to greater involvement in the primary speaker's turn. Features such as sentence completions and echoes function much like SMRs in that they are overtly supportive, yet carry little or no independent or new referential meaning. As Example 4 illustrates, cooperative overlaps differ from minimal responses in that they are not drawn from a closed set of forms, and listeners are more involved in the joint construction of text. At the high involvement end of the scale co-operative overlapping becomes "duetting" (Coates 1991; Falk 1980) or contrapuntal talk which may appear to resemble disruptive interruptions, although participants clearly do not orient to them as such.

⁸ Previous labels for this type of verbal feedback include "extended backchannels" (West & Zimmerman 1983), "non-turn-competitive incomings" (French & Local 1983), "non-floor-holding turns" (Edelsky 1981), "co-operative overlaps" (Tannen 1990), "supportive interruptive forms" (Stubbe 1991, 1994), "secondary speaker contributions" (Bublitz 1988) and "all-together-now" talk or interruptions (Coates 1989; Dunne & Ng 1994; Pilkington 1994, 1998).

(4) Cooperative overlaps (COs)

DPC080:0430-0445

Context: Two female friends discuss proposed purchase of a piece of land.

Kate: mm i mean if you put your house up here you'd be tucked away from your property +
//you'd be tucked away from- yes it would actually i think + \

Tessa: /it would be good for vegetable gardens and things like that round there wouldn't it +\\

Kate: yeah=/
Tessa: /='cause it looked like very fertile soil there

3.5 Frequency, distribution and placement of feedback responses

In previous research, as noted earlier, the overall frequency of verbal feedback throughout an interaction has often been assumed to relate directly to how supportive a particular listener is being. However, the analysis of the WSC data suggested that at the macro-level at least, the overall frequency of feedback in an interaction can at best provide only a crude measure of interactive supportiveness (see also Stubbe 1994). This is because, in addition to the variability in the *type* of feedback response already discussed, both the *frequency* and *distribution* of feedback also varies both within and between particular interactions. This variation appears to correlate with a number of different factors, including the text types produced by the participants, the overall balance between participants in the roles of speaker and listener, and the nature of the topics under discussion, as well constraints imposed by the immediate discourse context.

On the other hand, at a more localised discourse level, the way in which feedback responses are distributed had much clearer functional implications in the WSC data. For example, a clustering of responses in close succession appeared to be consistent with a higher level of involvement, either at an affective level, or with some aspect of discourse structure, independently of the form of the verbal response. Thus a cluster of NMRs at a point of topic shift could indicate the listener's alignment with the current speaker taking an extended turn. By way of contrast, the more spaced out but constant and explicitly supportive feedback provided by Carol in examples (1) and (3) also suggested high involvement and explicit positive affect, but in this case for the reason that such regular feedback is not expected throughout a narrative sequence, and its presence therefore carries relatively more functional weight. Examples such as these show that it is not necessary or appropriate to use verbal feedback to the same extent or in the same way in all contexts, and that speakers are sensitive to such norms. Therefore, although a high relative rate of verbal feedback can be one indicator of conversational involvement and mutual interest, this cannot be measured in absolute terms.

In addition, minimal responses often follow a consistent pattern of precise and well-timed placement at the end of information units such as the tone group or clause (Coates 1989, Dittman and Llewellyn 1967) or at phrasal junctures in predicates (Fellegly 1992). The latter study also reported a pattern of sensitivity to semantic completion at an underlying level. Intonation plays a part too in signalling where a minimal response is expected to occur in certain text types such as narratives (Corston 1993). However, in the WSC data, as elsewhere, minimal responses also frequently occurred at non-boundary points, a phenomenon which has been associated with more active listening styles, as noted in 3.1 above. The link between the contrapuntal placement of feedback responses and the listener's degree of involvement in the conversation was seen most clearly in the case of cooperative overlaps.

4 Analysis of gender variation in WSC sub-sample

4.1 Sample and method of analysis

A sample of eight dyadic conversations (roughly 17,288 running words in total) was selected from the WSC. Each extract was approximately ten minutes in length, beginning and ending at natural topic boundaries. Age and social class were controlled in selecting the sample: all 16 participants were between 40 and 60 years old, and came from professional backgrounds. Further, the speakers in each dyad were matched for both gender and ethnicity, with two conversations representing each gender/ethnicity group (i.e. Māori men, Māori women, Pakeha men and Pakeha women, as shown in Table 1).

TABLE 1: Sample design

	Pakeha/NZ European	Māori
Male	4 (2 dyads)	4 (2 dyads)
Female	4 (2 dyads)	4 (2 dyads)

In total, 905 instances of supportive interactive feedback were identified and classified as NMRs, SMRs or COs. Given the interactive nature of listener feedback, a simple comparison of individual raw scores would not allow meaningful comparisons between individuals or groups of speakers. However, because participants were matched for gender and ethnicity, it was possible to use the dyad as the statistical unit of analysis. (Nevertheless, it is important to note that this does introduce a different limitation, namely that by using only matched dyads, the patterns of interaction identified may not generalise to mixed dyads or groups).

The raw totals and the total number of words uttered for each dyad were used to calculate the rate of feedback responses in relation to the total word count expressed as the number of occurrences per 1000 words. The proportion of each type of feedback in relation to the total number of feedback responses was then calculated for each dyad, expressed as a percentage figure. The statistical significance of differences between sets of dyad index scores representing each gender or ethnicity group was evaluated using Mann-Whitney U (for non-parametric, 2 sample score comparison).

The placement of minimal responses was also investigated. Minimal responses occurring at transition relevance points (i.e. potential or actual points of speaker change) were included in the count, along with the more frequent ‘within-turn’ or backchannel responses which are interpolated into the primary speaker’s utterance. Instances of clustering of responses were noted, and in the case of ‘within-turn’ minimal responses, a count was done to determine the relative frequencies of responses occurring at the boundaries of syntactic units or tone groups versus those that were inserted at non-boundary points.

A macro-level analysis of the discourse structure of the eight extracts was then carried out, to check the possible influence of contextual factors such as text type and topic of conversation on the feedback patterns observed. The results of this analysis were subsequently cross-checked against the wider dataset of 22 interactions from which the sample was drawn to confirm the generalisability or otherwise of any patterns observed.

4.2 Quantitative patterns

4.2.1 Overall frequency of supportive verbal feedback responses

Table 2 shows the total rate of occurrence per 1000 words of all types of verbal feedback responses (calculated for both dyads in each gender x ethnicity category).

TABLE 2: Frequency of feedback responses (all categories)

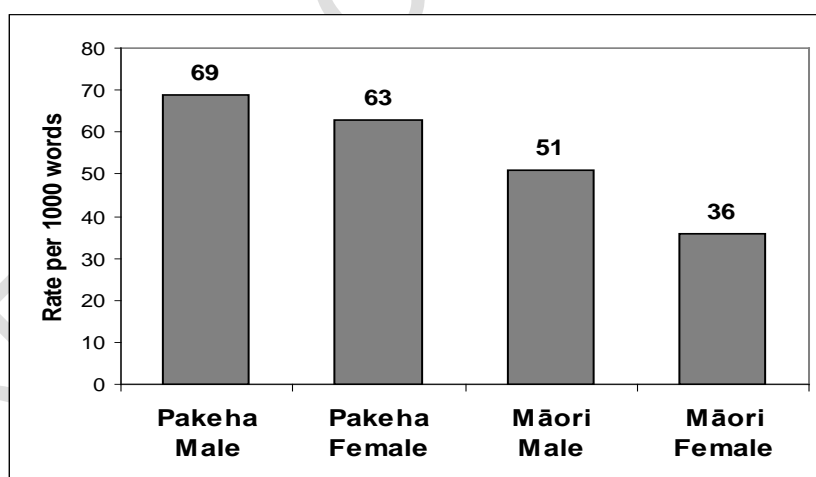
(Rate per 1000 running words)

	Female		Male	
	Dyad	Rate	Dyad	Rate
Pakeha	PF1	60	PM1	55
	PF2	65	PM2	82
Subtotal		63		69
Māori	MF1	38	MM1	59
	MF2	34	MM2	42
Subtotal		36		51
TOTAL	Female dyads	50	Male dyads	60

In terms of gender, the overall averages for men and women were broadly comparable at 60 and 50 per 1000 words respectively overall, though the highest rate was produced by a Pakeha male dyad (PM2), with the Māori women producing by far the lowest rate of feedback.

The data also shows a clear grading of feedback rates in this sample between Māori and Pakeha, as shown in Figure 2.

FIGURE 2: Verbal feedback rates by gender and ethnicity



This pattern is consistent with previous research on cross-cultural differences, and is at least partly explained by the observation in previous research that Māori interactional norms include a lower baseline for the amount of verbal feedback considered appropriate or necessary, together with differences in the use and interpretation of pauses and silence and a greater use of indirect feedback strategies such as code switching (see Metge & Kinloch 1984; Britain 1992; Stubbe 1998). This result nicely illustrates the pitfalls in assuming that gender or ethnicity somehow operate as unitary categories when we are analysing variation (see also Stubbe 1998).

4.2.2 Distribution of different feedback types

Minimal versus extended feedback (MR vs CO)

The figures in Table 3 shows that, as expected, minimal responses (NMRs and SMRs combined) accounted for the majority (74% to 88%) of all feedback responses produced by each dyad, regardless of gender or ethnicity. However, the data also showed a small but consistent gender difference across the sample, with females tending to produce proportionately fewer minimal responses and more cooperative overlaps than males. The largest gap was between Māori women and men, but the proportions for Pakeha and Māori women were comparable and in both cases were higher than for both groups of men.

TABLE 3: MRs and COs as a proportion of all feedback

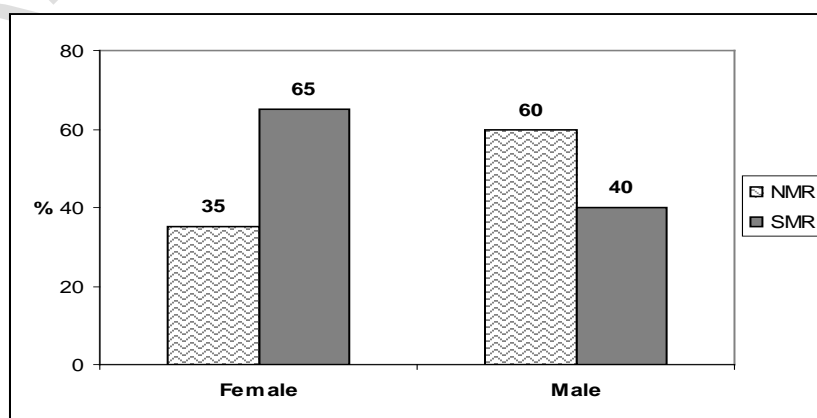
	Female		Male	
	% MR	% CO	% MR	% CO
Pakeha	74	26	80	20
Māori	77	23	88	12
Overall	75.5	24.5	84	16

This pattern may well have affected the gender distribution for overall feedback rates reported above because of the way feedback responses were indexed here (namely in terms of occurrences per 1000 words). For the same reason, the figures shown in Table 3 for cooperative overlaps are probably understated by comparison with those for minimal responses, and the gender variation is therefore likely to be greater than is immediately apparent from these statistics.

Neutral versus supportive minimal responses (NMR vs SMR)

Figure 3 demonstrates that, in addition to a higher proportion of minimal responses overall, the male dyads in this sample consistently produced a higher proportion of *neutral* minimal responses (NMRs) than the female dyads, and a correspondingly lower proportion of explicitly *supportive* minimal responses (SMRs). The greatest proportion (65%) of female minimal responses comprised SMRs, whilst the reverse was true of males, for whom NMRs comprised 60% of total minimal responses.

FIGURE 3: Proportion of minimal response types by gender



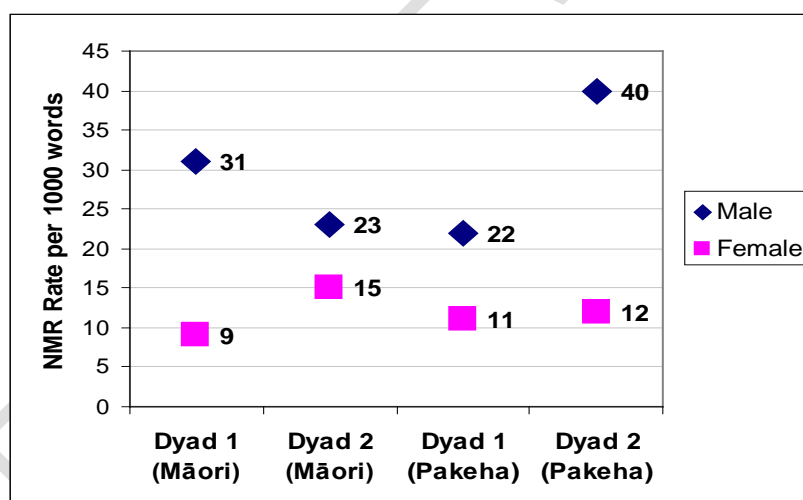
This inverse pattern of gender variation held true across the sample, although as we see in Table 4, the two Pakeha female dyads produced on average one third more SMRs than all other dyad pairs in numeric terms.

TABLE 4: Frequency of SMRs by gender and ethnicity

	Female		Male	
	Average rate per 1000 words	% total MRs	Average rate per 1000 words	% total MRs
Pakeha	30	64%	19	41%
Māori	19	68%	21	39%
Totals/Overall %	24.5	65%	20	40%

Figure 4 plots the range of overall NMR rates for each dyad by gender and ethnicity. This clearly shows that *all* male dyads produced higher NMR rates than *all* female dyads in this sample, a result that was statistically significant ($U(4,4) = 0, p=0.021$).

FIGURE 4: Range of NMR rates per dyad (by gender and ethnicity)



Explicitly supportive feedback responses (SMRs vs CO)

When SMRs and cooperative overlaps (COs) were combined into a single functional category, a much higher proportion of female feedback responses could be classified as explicitly supportive, ‘high-involvement’ feedback than was the case for the men. Figure 5 shows that, on average, almost three quarters (73.5%) of the women's feedback were explicitly supportive, while just under half of the men's feedback came into this category. This result was statistically significant ($U(4,4) = 0; p= 0.021$).

FIGURE 5: Proportion of explicitly supportive responses by gender

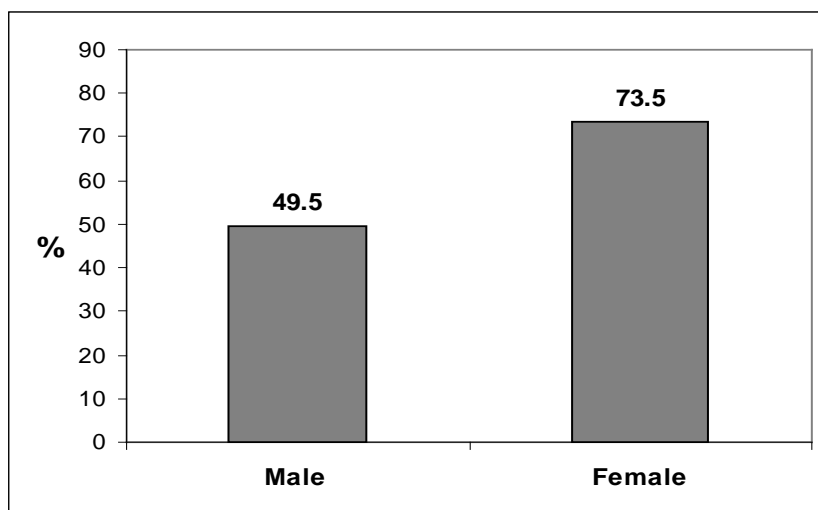
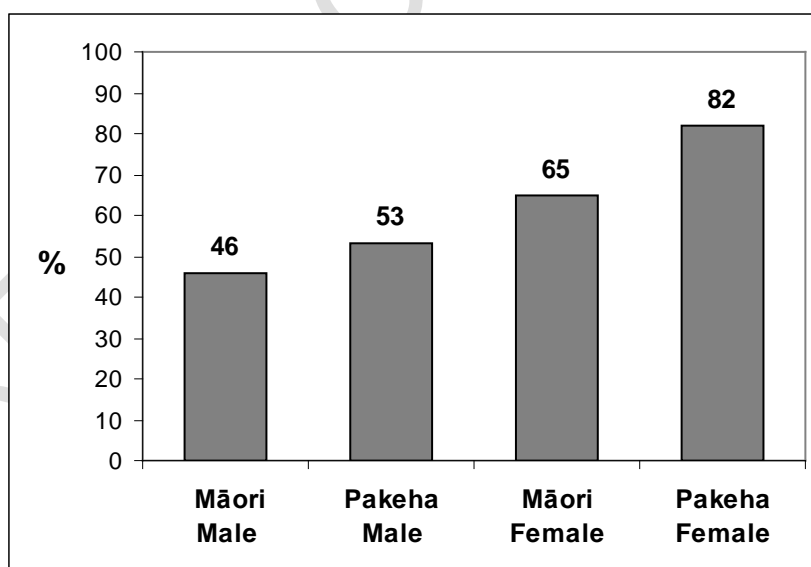


Figure 6 clearly illustrates the interaction between gender and ethnicity in the use of explicitly supportive feedback. Overall, the tendency to use more of this type of feedback is particularly marked for the Pakeha women in the sample, as we also saw for the SMR rates shown in Table 4 above. However, because the proportions for the Māori listeners overall relative to Pakeha are slightly lower anyway, the male-female differential remains roughly equivalent for both ethnic groups.

FIGURE 6: Proportion of explicitly supportive responses by gender and ethnicity



To sum up, overall the women in this sample tended to use a higher proportion of both types of explicitly supportive verbal feedback. Interestingly, however, Māori and Pakeha women signalled this higher level of involvement in different ways, with the Pakeha women making proportionately greater use of SMRs, while the Māori women were more likely to use cooperative overlaps.

4.2.3 Placement of minimal responses within turns

The placement of minimal responses within a turn was the final variable to be quantified. All minimal responses which occurred within a speaker's turn were classified according to whether or not they occurred at the boundary of an information unit (a TRP/ transition relevance point). Table 5 shows the proportions of within-turn minimal responses which occurred during a stream of talk, rather than at a unit boundary.

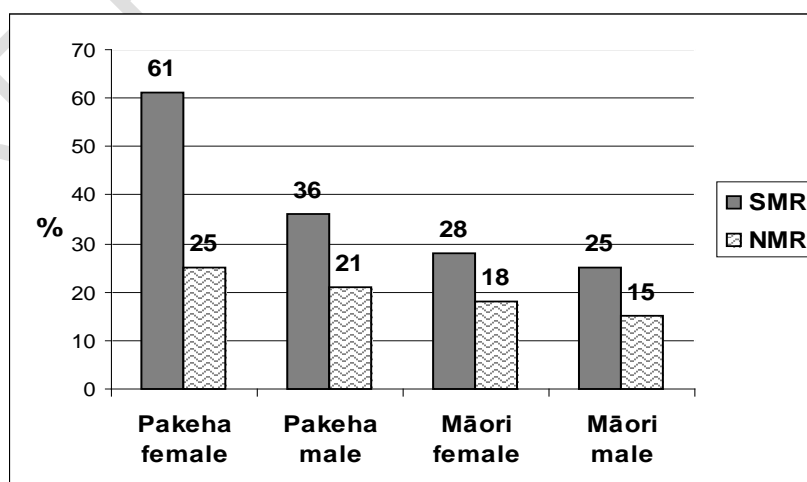
TABLE 5: Proportion of non-boundary minimal responses within utterances
% of total MR rate

	Female	Male
Pakeha	48	24
Māori	20	25
Overall %	34	25

The Pakeha women placed minimal responses at non-boundary points almost half the time, and were also at least twice as likely to place minimal responses at non-boundary points compared with either the Pakeha men or the Māori listeners of either gender. At one level this result is consistent with the findings of previous research (e.g. Fishman 1983; Fellego 1995; Coates 1991, 2004); namely, that women are more likely to place their responses throughout the stream of talk, while men are more likely to wait for the end of a syntactic unit. However, it also once more highlights the fact that gender patterns do not necessarily remain constant across other group boundaries such as ethnicity.

The analysis revealed a particularly interesting pattern in relation to the use of NMRs and SMRs in cases where a minimal response was placed throughout the stream of talk rather than at a boundary point). Figure 7 shows that regardless of gender or ethnicity, a significantly higher proportion of total MRs occurring in this environment are SMRs rather than NMRs.

FIGURE 7: Proportions of NMRs and SMRs at non-boundary points



Again, this tendency was particularly marked in the case of the Pakeha women: while just under half of their total minimal responses were placed at non-boundary points, over 60% of their SMRs occurred there. This result correlates with the higher proportion of SMRs and COs used by the Pakeha women overall, and is consistent with an overall tendency for both Pakeha and Māori women to make greater use of contrapuntal responses as a feedback strategy.

4.2.4 Summary of quantitative results

The analysis revealed no significant correlation between gender and the overall frequency of supportive listener responses. However, when the results were broken down further according to the different feedback types and placement of responses within a turn, some interesting gender patterns did emerge.

First, the men produced a significantly higher rate of neutral minimal feedback than the women, and a higher proportion of their feedback overall was of the neutral and minimal response types. By contrast, a markedly higher proportion of the women's feedback responses were overtly supportive, with a correspondingly higher rate of cooperative overlaps; fewer were minimal responses, and of those, a greater proportion were supportive minimal responses in non-boundary positions. In short, the quantitative data showed a clear tendency for men to respond more neutrally and minimally, while the women's feedback included a greater proportion of responses which were both overtly supportive and more extended and contrapuntal in nature.

Second, there was a clear interaction in this data between gender and ethnicity: Māori and Pakeha interlocutors were not equally likely to use the same strategies or to produce similar rates of feedback. For example although both Māori and Pakeha women used a greater *proportion* of overtly supportive feedback than men of either ethnicity, the Pakeha women produced such feedback at a significantly higher *rate* than the Māori women. On the other hand, the gender difference in the use of cooperative overlaps was more marked for the Māori listeners, while the Pakeha women in this sample were the most likely of all the informants to place within-turn minimal responses, particularly SMRs, at non-boundary points in an utterance.

4.3 Analysis of contextual variables

The degree of variation between dyads and *within* groups (men, women, Māori, Pakeha) in the data analysed for this study suggests that the macro-contextual factors such as text type, discourse structure (dialogic/monologic) and topic type, discussed earlier, may well have influenced the feedback patterns reported in the previous section. Accordingly, a qualitative analysis of the discourse structure of the eight extracts in the sub-sample was carried out to identify such influences. The following tendencies were evident (and were also checked against the 22-extract initial sample discussed in section 3 above).

Firstly, in those interactions where both speakers were actively involved in topical development throughout all or most of the conversation, overall feedback rates tended to be higher relative to those for other members of the same gender or ethnic group. These interactions were also characterised by regular alternation of the role of 'topical speaker' with both speakers contributing topic content more or less equally, and by a higher proportion of opinion or problem-solving texts. Conversely, in more monologic interactions where one speaker dominated in the role of topical speaker for relatively long stretches of the discourse, and where the interaction comprised predominantly narrative and description text types, overall feedback rates for that dyad were generally lower.

Secondly, as in previous studies, the characteristics of the topic(s) being discussed also correlated

with the degree and type of listener involvement. Regardless of gender, the highest rates of explicitly supportive types of feedback occurred in those conversations, or sections of conversations, where personal or sensitive topics were being discussed, especially where these involved a degree of self-disclosure or, as in gossip or opinion texts, the overt evaluation of the other person's behaviour or ideas.

These points will now be illustrated by close analysis of several extracts. This will serve at the same time to demonstrate how the analysis and interpretation of distributional patterns observed in corpus data can be enriched by taking contextual variables into account.

Example 5 is taken from an interaction between two Pakeha male speakers (Dyad PM2). This is a typical excerpt from the conversation, throughout which both speakers contributed roughly equal amounts and alternated in the role of topical speaker. The two men were colleagues in the music industry; they knew each other well and were engaged in relaxed chat about topics of mutual interest, and about which they shared a large amount of background knowledge. Their conversation included a number of work-related gossip sequences, as well as a more general sharing of 'news and views', and the excerpt illustrates how the two men both signalled their close involvement as listeners through the use of frequent precision-timed verbal feedback. (Verbal feedback responses are in bold).

**(5) Two Pakeha men discuss the staging of a modern opera
DPC310:0225-0320**

- H: mm be interesting to see what [name of opera] is like
W: **exactly**
H: it's getting a huge amount of publicity i//suppose just by virtue of it having been=
W: /mm\
H: =picked up by the festival
W: **yeah yeah**
H: but er but it's sort of i mean i can't help//laughs\
W: /laughs\
H: i mean//it seems\
W: /mm\
H: =mean //those things\
W: /i don't know about\
H: I suspect \ /is it do you think mm + mm\
W: with chorus and
H: **yeah**
W: but i- i've never- i heard it in the last festival in that concert performance did you
H: no i was away +//mm\
W: /oh right\
H: **yeah?**
W: a higher i mean a high soprano singing quite fast narrative//about top g just absurd\
H: /laughs] yeah\

This dyad produced the highest overall rate of feedback of all the interactions in the sample, and the third highest rate of overtly supportive feedback. It is also the only male interaction in the sample where the topics discussed had any significant personal content, whereas three of the four female interactions did. As predicted by previous research, the dominant text types (gossip, discussion), discourse structure (dialogic) and topic types (personal, 'office politics') all correlate here with a high rate of verbal feedback, in particular explicitly supportive feedback. However, this predominantly takes the form of minimal feedback and laughter, not cooperative overlapping.

By comparison, the other Pakeha male interaction (Dyad PM1) produced a significantly lower rate of feedback and was also noticeably different in other ways. Although the speakers here also knew each other well, and the purpose of the talk too was primarily social, the nature of the topic appeared to produce a number of differences at the discourse level. Here, the participants were predominantly exchanging stories about their respective experiences with painting their houses, a far more neutral topic, which generated mainly narrative and description texts with one or other speaker holding the floor for extensive periods. In this case, the choice of topic with its associated text types and turn taking structure appears to have had a direct correlation with both the relatively low frequency of feedback, and the predominant use of neutral minimal feedback.

A contextual analysis of the two Māori female interactions (MF1 and MF2) may provide some explanation as to why these dyads produced the lowest rates of verbal feedback, both overall and relative to the other Māori interactions (see Table 2 above), while at the same time producing a higher proportion of SMRs and cooperative overlaps than any of the conversations involving either the Māori or Pakeha men. Both of these interactions involved a number of narrative sequences, and as we have seen, this text type tends to generate a lower relative rate of verbal feedback. There is also an ethnic dimension - the use of various indirect feedback devices was most marked in the interactions between the Māori women. These included supportive silences, code-switching into Māori, deferred feedback, and implicit contextualisation devices such as the “second story” phenomenon described by Sacks (Jefferson 1992) where a participant retells and or adds to an interlocutor’s previous narrative (discussed in greater detail in Stubbe 1998: 273-8). There were also, however, several extended sequences within these two interactions where the participants engaged in very active co-construction of the text, coinciding with a shift to a more emotive topic. The overall count, based on each identified instance of localised verbal feedback across the extracts as a whole, therefore downplays the actual amount of facilitative feedback going on in these two interactions; this is reflected instead in the high proportion of explicitly supportive and contrapuntal feedback in these interactions.

Finally, it is instructive to compare two interactions (MM1 and PF2) which are quite similar in terms of their overall discourse structure and with middling overall rates of feedback (59 and 65 per 1000 respectively). In both cases the participants were friends who were attempting to reach a consensus on a topic in which they had a strong interest, yet about which they had differing opinions. Both conversations took the form of animated discussions, essentially dialogic in structure, with each participant contributing very actively throughout the discussion. In both cases, neither speaker can be said to have had any special claim to expertise, except where they resorted to personal experiences to support a point. They could be observed to have strongly held opinions and supporting evidence they wished to contribute, while at the same time carefully managing the interaction to avoid making potential areas of disagreement overt. Based on previous research, in such a context we might expect a relatively high rate of verbal feedback overall, coupled with a greater incidence of explicitly supportive feedback, and indeed, both interactions provide evidence of a relatively high degree of active listener involvement. However, the way in which that involvement was enacted is quite different in each case.

In Example 6 (Dyad MM1), the two men are talking socially over morning tea at their workplace, discussing a controversial television programme about the place of homosexual men in traditional Māori society. One has seen the programme; the other has not, although he has previously talked about it at length with his wife.

(6) Two Māori men discuss a controversial television programme

DPC317:0325-0420

Tama: .and they- they still need to- they- they had a right to be part of the hapu //the\ kinship //group\
Eru: /yes\ /yes\
Tama: um and you see the normality as i see it from where i come from in- in my community was 'cause
you know we had people with that s- with those TRAITS +
Eru: **yes yes**
Tama: er they were not tre- if they were men
Eru: **mm**
Tama: they were given MEN'S work
Eru: **yes yes**
Tama: and you know [voc] and i know of a family that- that expected the- the- th- the person
with those showing those tendencies to be he was made to plough
Eru: **mm**
Tama: like the other brothers
Eru: **yes**
Tama: and he was expected to milk the cows like the //other\ brothers //+ \ expected to go fencing
Eru: /mm\ /mm\
Tama: like the others he was not given treatment other than what his gender //+\ required him to do
Eru: /yes\
Eru: **yes yes**

Throughout this interaction, one participant often took the role of primary speaker for relatively long periods, as in the example above, and although a relatively high proportion (33%) of within-turn minimal responses occurred at non-boundary points, virtually none of the feedback provided comes from the cooperative overlap category. The turn-taking organisation is thus very much of the 'one at a time' type. Secondly, less than half of the feedback in this interaction can be classified as being explicitly supportive in function. However, at a rate of 59 feedback responses per 1000 words, this interaction has a notably higher rate of verbal feedback than any of the other three Māori dyads. This interaction also does not exhibit the periodic monologues and long pauses with no feedback which seem to account most obviously for the lower feedback rates elsewhere in the Māori data (see Stubbe 1998:281). By comparison with more typical Māori listener behaviour, these characteristics indicate relatively active and overtly supportive listener involvement. It seems that explicit verbal feedback was a more important strategy here in achieving the required balancing act than it was in the other Māori interactions which consisted primarily of narrative and description text types, and probably functioned here largely as a negative politeness device.

Excerpt 7 (Dyad PF2) provides a contrasting example. This was a discussion between two women of a collection of site plans relating to a proposed joint land purchase, and provides a marked contrast in terms of feedback use. It also provides an excellent illustration of how participants can use both cooperative overlaps and non-boundary minimal responses to signal how closely they are following the other speaker's thought processes. The excerpt below is representative of the whole conversation, with the two women alternating in a series of short turns, which often overlapped. The construction of the discourse was collaborative to such an extent that it was often impossible to assign the role of topical or primary speaker to either participant, and almost 90% of the feedback provided by both participants consisted of SMRs or cooperative overlaps..

(7) Two Pakeha women discuss landscaping plans

DPC080:0800-0865

- A: and if you can make rooms vistas to the lake and all sorts of things i mean it could be just lovely couldn't it
- B: or instead of having one big lake=
- A: =yes //i would have s- a chain of little ones\
- B: /you could have + a chain of \ ponds and a walk
//among them or something like that like that a-\=
- A: / mm yes up to about here up- up here \
- B: =chain of ponds
- A: yep
- B: like that ++ with //largish trees on the-\ on the intersections of the //walks\
- A: /yes mm \ /mm\

In these two cases, a relatively high rate of minimal responses signalled high involvement for the men (they were at the top of the range for the Māori participants), while the women used a different set of strategies to achieve the same interactional goal (which, as pointed out earlier, also pushed their overall frequency count down, because they used more extended and contrapuntal sequences to provide their feedback).

The contextual factors described above help to account for the within-group differences in overall rates of feedback reported above for individual dyads. It is also clear that although a high relative rate of verbal feedback is one indicator of conversational involvement and mutual interest, this cannot be measured in absolute terms. The appropriate amount, type and placement of feedback varies in a consistent fashion according to both the context, topic and structure of the interaction, as well as to the norms of the social group(s) to which the participants belong, and any patterns of gender difference must be interpreted against this complex backdrop.

5 Conclusion

5.1 Methodological issues

This chapter has highlighted several methodological issues which arise when we try to use naturalistic corpus data to analyse patterns of occurrence for a complex discourse phenomenon such as verbal feedback. These include the technical limitations and theoretical issues inherent in attempting to 'code and count' when dealing with open-ended classes of pragmatic devices, the problem of dealing in an analytically robust way with the absence of a one-to-one relationship between form and pragmatic function, and the difficulty of teasing out the complex interrelationships between the various factors that may correlate with or account for patterns of inter-group variation.

The technical issues arising from trying to apply corpus linguistic approaches to the study of discourse have been increasingly commented on by discourse and pragmatics researchers in recent years as technical progress has allowed linguistic corpora and the associated analytic tools to evolve into ever larger and more sophisticated forms. For example, Pichler argues that "a uniform model of discourse variation" is needed which defines discourse variables more to more adequately take account of their flexibility and multifunctionality (2010:1), and Wong & Peters are rightly critical of the way in which "borrowing of terminology and a reliance on axiomatic

definition has resulted in a diverse nomenclature and an indeterminate inventory of forms” (2007:1). These difficulties will only multiply further as corpus linguistics expands into the realm of multimodal analysis of discourse (Knight & Adolphs 2007).

In the study presented above some of these issues were addressed by looking specifically at how verbal feedback is used from a broad functional perspective, rather than by simply quantifying a limited range of forms and plotting their distribution according to a pre-determined variable such as sex of speaker, as has often been the case in the past. The approach taken here has highlighted the sheer complexity and range of the interactional resources available to listeners. As we have seen, verbal feedback devices are typically multi-functional and are characterised by a very fluid relationship between the form used and the function or action performed. Listeners can be observed to make sophisticated choices as to the type, placement and frequency of the responses they provide in a way that is tailored to the emerging discourse context. This allows them to take an active role in influencing the topical development and interactive structure of a conversation as well as to convey a wide range of social and affective meanings.

The same characteristics which make verbal feedback such a flexible resource for listeners in conversation also make the task of interpretation an extremely challenging one for the analyst. The use and interpretation of verbal feedback is heavily contingent on the local sequential environment, and what is ‘appropriate’ is thus constantly being (re)negotiated throughout a conversation. Moreover, various other situational and contextual factors such as topic and text type, the structure of the discourse and the relationship between the participants also correlate and interrelate in complex ways with overall rates of feedback and the particular strategies selected for use in any given interaction. Samples of corpus data cannot be expected to control for this type of variability, but such factors will nonetheless inevitably have influenced what might be expected from listeners at a given point in a conversation and therefore what they actually did and how it might be interpreted.

Close attention to the local context is the key to understanding what listeners do and why they might be doing it that way in a particular instance. Any apparent inter-group patterns of variation must therefore always be interpreted in the light of the shared contextual and interpretive frameworks demonstrably being oriented to by all participants in a conversation. In the case of the present study, both men and women were observed to use a similar set of interactive resources to indicate their degree of involvement in a conversation along a supportive feedback continuum, and they oriented to similar normative expectations in relation to other variables such as text type and topic. However, the ways in which they deployed these resources did appear to vary systematically according to both gender and ethnicity.

The somewhat different patterns for the Māori and Pakeha women and men in this study also underline the importance of not simply assuming that gender differences, or any other inter-group differences for that matter, will apply across the board: ‘women’ and ‘men’ are not homogeneous groups (c.f. Coates 1989:11) any more than people from a particular ethnic or social group. Moreover, other personal and intergroup identities are bound to interact with gender in complex ways, although it is interesting that, at least in the data analysed here, there were nevertheless certain gender patterns which seemed to cross inter-group boundaries.

The listener's interactive and relational involvement in a conversation is the concept which linked all these variables and underpinned the model of supportive verbal feedback used in the analysis of gender variation presented in this chapter. According to this model, the interactive functions of feedback can range from providing the minimum amount of interactive feedback compatible with sustaining the conversation, to significantly influencing topic and turn taking structures,

right through to the joint construction of the discourse. At the propositional, relational or affective level, listener feedback may involve a quite neutral attention signal, or it may carry a greater or lesser degree of positive affective meaning, such as confirming or agreeing with another speaker's statement of fact or opinion or explicitly expressing empathy and interest in what is being said. Such strategies can function simultaneously to encourage and support contributions by other participants in an interaction, and to convey solidarity and shared understanding.

5.2 Feedback and gender

Despite the complexity of the data and the underlying pragmatics, this analysis nonetheless revealed some clear correlations between gender and patterns of feedback use. The key finding of the present study was that the males as a group provided proportionately more feedback which was both affectively neutral and minimal in form, while the females provided a significantly greater *proportion* of overtly supportive feedback, together with more extended and contrapuntal responses of various kinds. However, the actual *rates* and localised *distribution* and *placement* of feedback in this sample correlated more strongly with culturally relative norms and contextual factors such as text type and topic than with gender.

These findings are consistent with previous research which suggests that men and women (or different ethnic groups) (i) may use different strategies to achieve similar effects such as signalling greater or lesser involvement in a conversation, or conversely, may use certain ways of providing feedback to signal somewhat different meanings; and (ii) may have different baselines or starting points with respect to the amounts and types of verbal feedback which are considered appropriate in different contexts.

While at one level such observations are helpful in explaining the gender differences in listener behaviour reported here, they do not address the deeper question of why it is that women and men should have different response styles in the first place. Cameron (1995:41) argues that differences in the ways women and men interact are socially produced, and have their roots in unequal gender relations. Thus, if women and men systematically use different discourse strategies, this is because they are engaged in fundamentally different tasks. She goes on to suggest that different verbal practices should be seen simply as one aspect of the process by which a particular community defines masculinity and femininity. Rather than seeing male and female styles as simple markers of gender identity, she concludes that "...the styles themselves are produced as masculine and feminine, and that individuals make varying accommodations to those styles in the process of producing themselves as gendered subjects" (43).

Eckert and McConnell-Ginet take a similar approach in advocating that the study of language and gender should be grounded in "...detailed examination of the social and linguistic activities of specific communities of practice" (1995:469). Thus patterns of variation often emerge from the co-construction of gender and other variables such as class or ethnicity (501), and when speakers use a particular variant or speech style these do not simply reflect "a meaning already set and waiting to be recycled", but simultaneously produce a social meaning (503).

Such an approach provides a useful framework for understanding the sometimes elusive patterns of gender difference in a discourse feature as complex and variable as verbal feedback, one which typically defies attempts to find clear-cut bipolar oppositions once the data is analysed in context and in finer detail. Listeners can be observed to select from a wide range of feedback strategies in order to influence the topical development and interactive structure of a conversation, as well as to convey a range of social and affective meanings in a way that is

appropriate to the local discourse context. Moreover, localised verbal feedback of the kind analysed here is only one aspect of the listener's repertoire: there are many other ways to signal conversational involvement as well. It is therefore unlikely that there is any kind of predetermined relationship between a social category such as sex/gender and patterns of feedback use. A more plausible interpretation of the gendered patterns reported in this study, therefore, is that verbal feedback functions as one of a number of interactive resources available for 'doing gender' as one aspect of identity work, in addition to its many other interactive and social meanings.

In conclusion, this study has highlighted some of the limitations inherent in using linguistic corpora to study gender variation in the use of a complex discourse feature such as supportive verbal feedback. As we have seen, the multi-functionality and highly contingent nature of listener responses makes the job of quantifying and interpreting these discourse variables in natural conversations an extremely challenging one. One way of dealing with this challenge is by combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to the data, and by taking due account of the relevant contextual variables and functional complexities in interpreting the results. In the study presented here, the verbal feedback continuum provided a unifying analytic framework to account for the complex and fluid interrelationships between the various forms and functions of supportive verbal feedback. Using a flexible analytic model such as this makes it possible to generate valuable insights into wider distributional patterns which complement more in-depth micro-analysis of smaller data sets. Notwithstanding the very real challenges, linguistic corpora therefore remain an important and useful resource for the study of interactive discourse variables.

PRE-PROOF

Acknowledgements

- 1 The research on which this chapter is based was made possible by a grant from the New Zealand Foundation for Research, Science and Technology, and was carried out during the author's tenure as research fellow with the School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies, Victoria University of Wellington from 1996 - 2003.
- 2 I am grateful to all those who allowed their interactions to be recorded and analyzed as part of the Wellington Corpus of Spoken New Zealand English. I also thank Robert Sigley for his assistance with the statistical tests, and David Britain, Chris Lane, Janet Holmes and an anonymous referee for their useful input on earlier iterations of this work. Any errors and infelicities remain entirely my own responsibility.

Transcription conventions

The conventions used in the examples in this paper are a simplified version of those developed for the Wellington Corpus of Spoken New Zealand English.

(hello)	Transcriber's best guess at an unclear utterance
?	Rising or question intonation
-	Incomplete or cut off utterance
YES	Capitals denote emphatic stress
[laughs] [softly]	Paralinguistic features or transcriber comment
+	Pause of up to one second
//... ..\ /... ..\ ...= =... ...=/ /=...	Simultaneous speech
...= =...	Current speaker's utterance continues onto another line
...=/ /=...	Latching (no discernible gap between utterances)

References

- Aries, E. J. 1976. Interaction patterns and themes of male, female and mixed groups. *Small Group Behaviour*, 7, 1: 7-18.
- Aries, E. J. and F. L. Johnson 1983. Close friendship in adulthood: conversational content between same-sex friends. *Sex Roles*, 9, 12: 1183-1196.
- Bergvall, V.L. 1999. Toward a comprehensive theory of language and gender. *Language in Society*, 28, 2: 273-293.
- Bing, J.M. & V.L. Bergvall 1996. The question of questions: beyond binary thinking. In V.L.Bergvall, J.M. Bing & A.F. Freed (eds.), *Rethinking Language and Gender Research: Theory and Practice*. New York: Longman, 1-30.
- Britain, D. 1992. Linguistic change in intonation: The use of high rising terminals in New Zealand English. *Language Variation and Change* 4: 77-104.
- Bublitz, W. 1988. *Supportive Fellow-Speakers and Co-operative Conversations: Discourse Topics and 'Recipient Action' in a Particular Type of Everyday Conversation*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.
- Cameron, D. 1995. Rethinking language and gender studies: some issues for the 1990s. In Mills, S. (ed.) *Language and Gender: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*. London and New York: Longman. 31-44.
- Cameron, D. 1997. Performing gender identity. In S. Johnson & U.H. Meinhof (eds.), *Language and Masculinity*. Oxford: Blackwell, 47-64.
- Cameron, D. 2003. Gender and language ideologies. In J. Holmes and Miriam Meyerhoff (eds.) *Handbook of Language and Gender*. Blackwell: 447-467.
- Carter, R. and S. Adolphs 2008. Linking the verbal and visual: new directions for corpus linguistics. *Language and Computers*, 64:1, 275-91.
- Cheshire, J. 2002. Sex and gender in variationist research. In J.K. Chambers, P. Trudgill and N. Schilling-Estes (eds.) *Handbook of Language Variation and Change*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2002, pp. 423-43.
- Coates, J. 1987. Epistemic modality and spoken discourse. *Transactions of the Philological Society* 1987: 110-131.
- Coates, J. 1989. Gossip revisited: language in all-female groups. In J. Coates and D. Cameron (eds.), *Women in their Speech Communities*. U.K.: Longman. 94-122.
- Coates, J. 1991. Women's cooperative talk: a new kind of conversational duet? In C. Uhlig and R. Zimmerman (eds.) *Proceedings of the Anglistentag 1990 Marburg*. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag.
- Coates, J. 1996. *Women Talk*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Coates, J. 1998 (ed.). *Language and Gender. A Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Coates, J. 2003. *Men Talk*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Coates, J. 2004. (3rd Ed). *Women, Men and Language. A Sociolinguistic Account of Gender Differences in Language*. UK: Pearson Education.
- Crawford, M. 1995. *Talking Difference: On Gender and Language*. London and Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Dittmann, A.T. 1972. Developmental factors in conversational behaviour. *Journal of Communication* 22: 404-423.
- Dunne, M. and S.H. Ng 1994. Simultaneous speech in small-group conversation: all-together-now and one-at-a-time? *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 13, 1: 45-71.
- Eckert, P. and S. McConnell-Ginet 1995. Constructing meaning, constructing selves. Snapshots of language, gender and class from Belten High. In K. Hall and M. Bucholtz (eds.) *Gender Articulated. Language and the Socially Constructed Self*. New York and London: Routledge. 469-507.
- Eckert, P. and S. McConnell-Ginet 1999. New generalizations and explanations in language and gender research. *Language in Society*, 28, 2: 185-201.
- Eckert, P. and S. McConnell-Ginet 2003. *Language and Gender*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Eckert, P. and S. McConnell-Ginet 2007. Putting communities of practice in their place. *Gender and Language* 1,1: 27-37
- Edelsky, C. 1981. Who's got the floor? *Language in Society* 10: 383-421. Reprinted in D Tannen (ed.)

- 1993 *Gender and Conversational Interaction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Falk, J. 1980. The conversational duet. *Proceedings of the 6th Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society*. 6: 507-514.
- Farr, F. 2003. Engaged listenership in spoken academic discourse: the case of student-tutor meetings. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*. 2, 1: 67-85.
- Fellego A. M. 1995. Patterns and functions of minimal response. *American Speech*. 70, 2, 186.
- Filipi, A. and R. Wales 2003. Differential uses of okay, right, and alright, and their function in signaling perspective shift or maintenance in a map task. *Semiotica* 147, Nov 2003.
- Fishman, P. 1983. Interaction: the work women do. In B. Thorne, C. Kramarae and N. Henley (eds) *Language Gender and Society*. Rowley, Massachusetts: Newbury. 89-102.
- Freed, A. 2003. Epilogue: Reflections on language and gender research In J. Holmes and M. Meyerhoff (eds.) *Handbook of Language and Gender*. Blackwell: 699-721.
- Freed, A.F. and A. Greenwood 1996. Women, men and type of talk: What makes the difference? *Language in Society* 25, 1-26.
- French, P. and J. Local 1983. Turn-competitive incoming. *Journal of Pragmatics* 7, 1: 17-38.
- Gardner, R. 1997. The listener and minimal responses in conversational interaction. *Prospect*, 12, 12-32.
- Gardner, R. 1998. Between speaking and listening: The vocalisation of understandings. *Applied Linguistics*, 19, 204-224.
- Gardner, R. 2001. *When Listeners Talk: Response Tokens and Listener Stance*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Gardner, R. 2007. The Right connections: Acknowledging epistemic progression in talk. *Language in Society* 36, 319-341
- Gilbert, J. 1990. *Secondary School Students talking about science: language functions, gender and interaction in small group discussions*. Unpublished MA Thesis. Wellington: Victoria University.
- Haas, A. and M. Sherman 1982. Reported topics of conversation among same-sex adults. *Communication Quarterly*, 30, 4: 332-342.
- Hayashi, R. 1988. Simultaneous talk - from the perspective of floor management of English and Japanese speakers. *World Englishes* 7: 269-288.
- Hirschman, L. 1974. Analysis of assertive and supportive behaviour in conversations. Paper presented at *Linguistic Society of America Meeting*, July 1974.
- Holmes J. and M. Meyerhoff 2003 (eds.). *The Handbook of Language and Gender*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Holmes, J. 1995. *Women, Men and Politeness*. London and New York: Longman.
- Holmes, J. 2006. *Gendered Talk at Work: Constructing Gender Identity Through Workplace Discourse*. New York and Oxford: Blackwell.
- Holmes, J. and M. Meyerhoff 2003. Different voices, different views: an introduction to current research in language and gender. In J. Holmes and M. Meyerhoff (eds.) *Handbook of Language and Gender*. Blackwell: 1-17.
- Holmes, J. and M. Stubbe 1992. Women and Men Talking: Gender-based Patterns of Interaction. In S. Olsson (ed.) *The Gender Factor*. Dunmore Press 1992, 149-163.
- Holmes, J. and M. Stubbe 1997. Good listeners: gender differences in NZ conversation. *Women and Language* Vol XX, No. 2, 7-14.
- Holmes, J. and M. Stubbe 2003. Discourse in gendered workplaces: how do women manage it? In J. Holmes and M. Meyerhoff (Eds) *Handbook of Language and Gender*. Blackwell: 573-600.
- Holmes, J., B. Vine and G. Johnson 1998. *The Wellington Corpus of Spoken New Zealand English: a Users' Guide*. Wellington: School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies, Victoria University of Wellington.
- Holmes, J., L. Burns, M. Marra, M. Stubbe and B.Vine 2003. 'Women managing discourse in the workplace.' *Women in Management Review* 18 (8) 2003, pp 414- 424
- Holmes, J., M. Stubbe and M. Marra 2003. Language, Humour and Ethnic Identity Marking in New Zealand English. In C. Mair (ed.) *The Politics of English as a World Language. New Horizons in Postcolonial Cultural Studies. ASNEL Papers* 7. Amsterdam – New York: Rodopi, pp 431 – 456.

- Hyndman, C. 1985. Gender and language differences: a small study. Unpublished terms paper. Wellington: Victoria University.
- James, D. and J. Drakich 1993. Understanding gender differences in amount of talk: a critical review of research. In D. Tannen (ed.) *Gender and Conversational Interaction*. New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press. 281-312.
- Jefferson, G. 1984. Notes on a systematic deployment of the acknowledgment tokens 'yeah' and 'mmhm'. *Papers in Linguistics* 17 (2): 197-216.
- Jefferson, G. 1993. Caveat speaker: Preliminary notes on recipient topic-shift implicature. *Research on Language and Social Interaction*, 26, 1-30.
- Jefferson, G. 2002. Is 'no' an acknowledgment token? Comparing American and British uses of (+)/(-) tokens. *Journal of Pragmatics* 34 , 1345-1383
- Johnson, S. and U. H. Meinhof 1997 (eds). *Language and Masculinity*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Kalcik, S. 1975. 'Like Ann's gynecologist or the time I was almost raped.' Personal narratives in women's rap groups. *Journal of American Folklore*, 88: 3-11.
- Knight, D & S. Adolphs 2008. Multi-modal corpus pragmatics: The case of active listenership. In J. Romero-Trillo (ed) *Pragmatics and Corpus Linguistics. A Mutualistic Entente*, 175-90. Berlin. New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 175-90.
- Leet-Pellegrini, H. M. 1980. Conversational dominance as a function of gender and expertise. In: H. Giles, P. Robinson and P. Smith (eds) *Language: Social Psychological Perspectives*. Oxford: Pergamon Press, 97-104.
- Lehtonen, J. and K. Sajavaara, 1985. The silent Finn. In: D. Tannen and M. Saville-Troike (eds.) *Perspectives on silence*. Norwood, N J: Ablex, 193-201
- Maltz, D.N. and R.A. Borker 1982. A cultural approach to male-female miscommunication. In J. Gumperz (ed.) *Language and Social Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 196-216.
- Maynard, D.W. and R.M. Frankel 2006. On diagnostic rationality: bad news, good news, and the symptom residue. In J. Heritage and D.W. Maynard (eds.) *Communication in Medical Care. Interaction between Primary Care Physicians and Patients*. Studies in Interactional Sociolinguistics 20. Cambridge: CUP, 248-278.
- McCarthy, M. 2003. Talking Back: 'Small' Interactional Response Tokens in Everyday Conversation. *Research on Language and Social Interaction*, 36(1), 33-63
- McElhinny, B. and S. Mills 2007. Editorial: Launching Studies of Gender and Language in the Early 21st Century. *Gender and Language* 1,1: 1-13.
- Metge, J. and P. Kinloch, 1984. *Talking past each other: Problems of cross-cultural communication*. Wellington: Victoria University Press/Price Milburn.
- Munro, F. 1987. Female and male participation in small-group interaction in the E.S.O.L. classroom. Unpublished terms project. Graduate Diploma in TESOL. Sydney: Sydney College of Advanced Education.
- Nordenstam, K. 1992. Tag questions and gender in Swedish conversations. *Working Papers on Language Gender and Sexism*. 4, 1: 69-77.
- Norrick, N. 2011 (In Press). Listening practices in English conversation: The responses responses elicit. *Journal of Pragmatics* (2011), doi: 10.1016/j.pragma.2011.08.007
- Orestrom, B. 1983. *Turn-taking in English Conversations*. Lund: Liber.
- Pichler, H. 2010. Methods in discourse variation analysis: Reflections on the way forward. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*. 14: 581-608.
- Pilkington, J. 1994. *Women, Men and Gossip: What's the Story?* Unpublished MA Thesis. Victoria University of Wellington.
- Pilkington, J. 1998. 'Don't try and make out that I'm nice!' The Different Strategies women and Men Use when Gossiping. In Coates, J. (ed.). *Language and Gender: A Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell, 254-269.
- Reid Thomas, H. 1995. The use and interpretation by men and women of minimal responses in informal conversation. *Working Papers on Language Gender and Sexism*. 5, 1: 65-89.
- Reid, J. 1995. A study of gender differences in minimal responses. *Journal of Pragmatics*. 24: 489-512.
- Roger, D. 1989. Experimental studies of dyadic turn-taking behaviour. In D. Roger and P. Bull (eds.)

- Conversation: an Interdisciplinary Perspective*. Clevedon, U.K.: Multilingual Matters Ltd.
- Romaine, S. 1999. *Communicating Gender*. Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Sacks, H., E. Schegloff and G. Jefferson 1974. A simplest systematics for the organization of turn-taking for conversation. *Language* 50: 696-735.
- Schegloff, E. 1982. Discourse as interactional achievement: Some uses of 'uh huh' and other things that come between sentences. In D. Tannen (Ed.), *Analyzing discourse, text, and talk*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 71-93.
- Schegloff, E. 1993. Reflections on quantification in the study of conversation. *Research on Language and Social Interaction* 26 (1), 99-128.
- Schiffrin, D. 1987. *Discourse Markers*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Stenström, A. 1987. Carry-on signals in English conversation. *Costerus* 59: 87-119.
- Stenström, A. 1994. *An Introduction to Spoken Interaction*. UK: Longman.
- Stivers, T. 2004. 'No no no' and Other Types of Multiple Sayings in Social Interaction. *Human Communication Research* 30 (2), 260-293.
- 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.
- Strodbeck, F.L. and R.D. Mann 1956. Sex role differentiation in jury deliberations. *Sociometry* 19: 3-11.
- Stubbe, M. 1978. *Sex roles in conversation: a study of small group interaction*. Unpublished terms paper. Wellington: Victoria University.
- Stubbe, M. 1991. *Talking at cross-purposes? The effect of gender on New Zealand schoolchildren's interaction strategies in pair discussion*. Unpublished MA Thesis: Victoria University of Wellington.
- Stubbe, M. 1994. What's the Score? Qualitative Analysis in Gender Research. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 4, 1: 3-18.
- Stubbe, M. 1996. Active listening in conversation: gender and the use of verbal feedback. *Australian Linguistics Society Conference*, Canberra July 1996.
- Stubbe, M. 1998. 'Are you listening?' Cultural influences on the use of supportive verbal feedback in conversation. *Journal of Pragmatics* 29, 257-289.
- Stubbe, M. 1998. Striking a Balance: language, gender and professional identity. *Engendering Communication. Proceedings of the Fifth Berkeley Women and Language Conference 1998*. Berkeley: University of California Berkeley Women and Language Group, 1998, pp. 545-556.
- Stubbe, M. 1999. Research report: Māori and Pakeha use of selected pragmatic devices in a sample of New Zealand English. *Te Reo, Journal of the Linguistic Society of New Zealand*, 42.
- Stubbe, M. 2003. Taking language and gender research beyond the academy. Workshop. *Perception and Realization in Language and Gender Research: An International Conference*. COSWL/IGALA, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan, July 18-20, 2003. <http://www.linguistics.ucsb.edu/faculty/bucholtz/conference/stubbe.html>
- Stubbe, M. and J. Holmes 1995. 'You know', 'eh' and other 'exasperating expressions': an analysis of social and stylistic variation in the use of pragmatic devices in a sample of New Zealand English. *Language and Communication*, 15: 1: 63-88.
- Stubbe, M. and J. Holmes 2000. Talking Māori or Pakeha: signalling identity in discourse. In Allan Bell & Koenraad Kuiper (eds.) *New Zealand English*. Wellington: Victoria University Press/Benjamins 249-278.
- Stubbe, M., C. Lane, J. Hilder, E. Vine, B. Vine, J. Holmes, M. Marra, A. Weatherall 2003. Multiple Discourse Analyses of a Workplace Interaction. *Discourse Studies* 5(3), 351-388.
- Stubbe, M., J. Holmes, B. Vine, M. Marra 2001. Forget Mars and Venus, let's get back to earth: Challenging gender stereotypes in the workplace. In J. Holmes (ed.) *Gendered Speech in Social Context: Perspectives from Gown & Town*. Wellington: Victoria University Press.
- Talbot, M. 1998. *Language and Gender: an Introduction*. Oxford: Polity Press.
- Talbot, M. 2003. Gender stereotypes: reproduction and challenge. In J. Holmes and M. Meyerhoff (eds.) *Handbook of Language and Gender*. Blackwell: 447-467.
- Tannen, D. 1984. *Conversational style- analysing talk among friends*. Norwood, New Jersey: Ablex.
- Tannen, D. 1990. *You Just Don't Understand. Women and Men in Conversation*. Australia: Random House.

- Tannen, D. 1993. *Gender and Conversational Interaction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ward, N. and W. Tsukahara 2000. Prosodic features which cue back-channel responses in English and Japanese. *Journal of Pragmatics* 32 (2000) 1177-1207.
- Ward, N. and W. Tsukahara 2003 A study of responsiveness in spoken dialog. *International Journal of Human-Computer Studies* Volume 59, Issue 5, November 2003, Pages 603-630
- Weatherall, A. 2002. *Gender, Language and Discourse*. Women and Psychology Series. East Sussex and New York: Routledge.
- Wertheim, S., A. C. Bailee and M. Corston-Oliver 1998 (eds.). *Engendering Communication. Proceedings of the Fifth Berkeley Women and Language Conference*. April 24-26, 1998. Berkeley: Berkeley Women and Language Group.
- West, C. 2006. Coordinating closings in primary care visits: producing continuity of care. In J. Heritage and D.W. Maynard (Eds) *Communication in Medical Care. Interaction between Primary Care Physicians and Patients*. Studies in Interactional Sociolinguistics 20. Cambridge: CUP, 379-415.
- West, C. and A. Garcia 1988, Conversational Shift Work: A Study of Topical Transitions between Women and Men. *Social Problems*, Vol. 35, No. 5 (Dec., 1988), pp. 551-575
- West, C. and D. Zimmerman 1983. Small insults: a study of interruptions in cross-sex conversations between unacquainted persons. In B. Thorne, C. Kramarae and N. Henley (eds) *Language, Gender and Society*. 103-118.
- White, G.M. and K.A. Watson-Gegeo, 1990. Disentangling discourse. In: K.A. Watson-Gegeo and G.M. White, eds., *Disentangling. Conflict Discourse in Pacific Societies*, 3-52. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- White, S. 1989. 'Backchannels across cultures: A study of Americans and Japanese.' *Language in Society* 18(1): 59-76.
- Wodak, R. 1997 (ed). *Gender and Discourse*. London: Sage.
- Xudong, D 2008. The use of listener responses in Mandarin Chinese and Australian English conversations. *Pragmatics* 18:2.303-328
- Zimmerman, D.H. and C. West 1975. Sex roles, interruptions and silences in conversation. In B. Thorne and N. Henley (eds) *Language and Sex: Difference and Dominance*. Rowley, Massachusetts: Newbury House. 105-29.