The Survival of Interactional Sociolinguistics in the 21st Century

Silvia Blanca Irimiea, PhD

Abstract

Paradigm changes have occurred in all disciplines and fields of study all the time. The range of variability or change which affected major research areas has also triggered changes in the linguistic research of humanities studies. In the 21st century the pace at which new paradigmatic changes or turns appear has accelerated, with the result that, currently, researchers cannot confine their work to a single approach but need to position themselves simultaneously in relation to a variety of older and more recent turns. Amid these shifts, the present study looks at *interactional sociolinguistics* and its survival in the 21st century and highlights the reasons why it has given way to other sub-branches of linguistics. Equally, the study seeks to anticipate the possible future of interactional sociolinguistics.

Keywords: paradigm shift, interactional sociolinguistics, micro-analyses, inferences, contextualization, a sociolinguistics of globalisation

Introduction

In the "fast" capitalism in which sciences move fast forward and researchers can hardly keep pace with the advances of disciplines, let alone with the emergence of new theories, we cannot help wondering what might be the fate of many research trends and paradigms[1] in the 21st century. Thomas Kuhn's (1962) ideas of scientific revolutions and paradigm shifts made visible the historical and social nature of scientific theories. The notion of paradigm change has been replaced by the notion of "turns" and the idea that science and academic scholarship develop in cycles has become a widely accepted argument. Shifts in theoretical approaches considered mainstream or dominant alternate more often with emerging paradigms. Paradigm changes occur in all disciplines and fields of study all the time. In the 20th century, the most notable ones in human sciences included the cultural, interpretive, narrative, and postmodern turns. In the 21st century the pace at which new turns appear has accelerated with the result that, currently, researchers cannot confine their work to a single approach but need to position themselves simultaneously in relation to a variety of older and more recent turns. The range of variability or change has affected many research areas, so that we can speak of linguistic, discursive, performative, historic, material, affective, ontological, posthumanist and mobility turns, to name just a few. Amid these shifts, the present study looks at interactional *sociolinguistics* and its survival in the 21st century and seeks to anticipate its possible future.

Paradigmatic shifts and their consequences

In epistemology, as well as in any science, there are traditions or trends which may be more or less sustainable during a given period but which are all regarded as legitimate. At the same time, there are theories that give rise to other theories that are perfectly legitimate in the eyes of the scientific community but which, in time, may go out of use. Some sciences such as mathematics, physics, chemistry, astrology, geology and biology, known as "hard" sciences, are considered methodologically more rigorous, exact and objective. Roughly speaking, the natural **sciences** are considered hard sciences while social sciences are considered "soft". Because the soft sciences lack a central working paradigm and scientific rigour they are soft in comparison to the hard sciences. This difference explains in broad lines why humanists can adopt a variety of different paradigms, which can be accepted in the professional community more easily.

Thomas Kuhn's ideas of scientific revolutions and paradigm shifts, expressed in his landmark book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962) made visible the historical and social nature of scientific theories. Although the notion of paradigm later became widely criticised and replaced by the notion of "turns", it is a widely accepted idea that science and

[1] We use the concept of *paradigm shift* to describe a (profound) change in a fundamental model or perception of events.

academic scholarship develop in cycles in which periods of normal science and shifts in theoretical approaches considered mainstream or dominant alternate with less legitimate ones.

These shifts or turns characterise all disciplines and fields of study. In the 20th century, the most notable shifts in human sciences include the cultural, interpretive, narrative, and postmodern turns, while, in the 21st century, the pace at which new turns appear and replace older ones just seems to accelerate. At the beginning of the 21st century researchers cannot confine their work to a single approach but need to position themselves simultaneously in relation to a variety of older and more recent paradigms. These epistemological and ontological changes make the boundaries between paradigms volatile and uncertain.

P.L. Bernstein (1996) studied the paradigmatic changes in economy and admitted that "unstable and predictable changes are intrinsic to a modern, industrialist, capitalist, free-enterprise system" (7). Bernstein used mathematic indexes to validate his research in a domain which employs rigorous research instruments, but his findings can be extended to a soft domain such as linguistics or, for that matter, interactional sociolinguistics. Bernstein argued that paradigmatic changes are endogenous to the economic system and that, in spite of some cyclic spots, the rules of these shifts are never stable. However, Bernstein also suggested that paradigmatic shifts can be predicted if the causes that can trigger them are known (1996). If in the past paradigmatic shifts were unknown and uncontrolled, today such shifts can be anticipated to a certain extent, but the fact that they have become endemic makes them less controllable. A finding that can be transferred to linguistics as well is that "the feedback mechanisms that used to prevent paradigmatic shifts gradually succumbed to more powerful forces to a point where discontinuity has become the norm" (7). We can take this last remark and recognise that even in soft domains like interactional sociolinguistics shifts in trends and research traditions become less controllable and predictable.

Before we turn to interactional sociolinguistics, we shall cast a glance on paradigm shifts in applied linguistics. against the broader background of the 20th century mutations which occurred in different fields, generally acknowledged or accepted as a "shift" from positivism to post-positivism, the major shift in applied linguistics consisted in the move away from the principles of behaviourist psychology and structural linguistics in favour of the alternative of cognitive psychology, while also moving the focus from structure to meaning. Important effects of the shift in the field of second language acquisition, for example, were: cooperative learning, learner autonomy, focus on meaning and teacher and student as co-learners. However, such an acceptance does not take place in the absence of scientific arguments. As a result of the valid scientific arguments brought against the behaviourist approaches, cognition won.

In order to anticipate the fate of interactional sociolinguistics, we focus first on what interactional sociolinguistics is and on Gumperz and Hymes's propositions. Then we look at the relation it bears to other branches in an attempt to highlight its "openness", and finally, on the basis of the discussed arguments, we shall make some assumptions regarding its survival in the 21st century.

Interactional sociolinguistics

Interactional sociolinguistics is both a branch of linguistics, very much related to linguistic anthropology and to conversation analysis, and a stand-alone branch which has evolved as an academic discipline in the last two decades. Interactional sociolinguistics (IS) is indebted to Gumperz and Hymes' early efforts to put together a general theory that could span language and society, and explain them both by means of investigating the recordings of face-to-face interactions, and noting the significant differences in the participants' linguistic repertoires. However, their interpretation of the interaction went further trying to unveil the (institutional) power the participants involved in interactions held in society.

Interactional sociolinguistics developed at the crossroads of several disciplines extracting its roots from even more diverse areas of scholarly research, such as: ethnography, dialectology, pragmatics and conversation analysis, areas to which it is closely related. In a succinct article on interactional sociolinguistics, Benjamin Bailey (2008) highlights its merit as lying in "analysing how social knowledge and linguistic knowledge intersect in creating meaning in talk" to which he adds another dimension, the "cultural nature of communicative action" (2317). Hence, interactional sociolinguistics can be described as a broad interdisciplinary approach that lies at the intersection of several disciplines and borrows some of their methods. In addition, it provides insights into the way social aspects combine with linguistic and cultural aspects to create meaning in talk.

IS has come to cover a wide range of levels of organisation, from the phonetic level to the institutional level. Given the insight potential offered by interactional sociolinguistics, Auer & Roberts (2011:381) recommended that researchers should "roll up [their] linguistic sleeves and drill down to the detail of problems", while Rampton (1) put forward the opinion that they should make "the maximum use of the sensitizing frameworks available in the (sub-) disciplines focusing on language", one of which is IS.

Interactional sociolinguistics has grown on Gumperz and Hymes' crucial collection *Directions in Sociolinguistics: The Ethnography of Communication* published in 1972 and on Gumperz's publication of *Studies in Interactional Sociolinguistics* in 1982. The volume *Directions in Sociolinguistics: The Ethnography of Communication* put forward several issues that outlined the central concerns for interactional sociolinguistics. The first remarkable concern articulated by Gumperz and Hymes was the quest for a theory "capable of treating language as integral to social and cultural process, as well as the need to develop methods and technical concepts suited to describing this" (Rampton 2). Hymes opines that this concern should become "a basic science that does not yet exist" (38) whereas Gumperz & Hymes agree that "recent publications […] have, so far, not been integrated into any theory of language and society" (vi-vii). Second, Gumperz and Hymes' commitment to drill deeper into the relationship between language and society occurred in a period of political unrest characterised through decolonisation, civil rights movements, educational issues, etc. Third, another outstanding achievement of their commitment to explain models of the interaction between language and social life was the recognition that 'there must be […] an approach [to description] that partly links, but partly cuts across, partly builds between… the disciplines'(Hymes 1972:41). Indeed, this was an early and firm recognition of the interdisciplinarity of interactional sociolinguistics, of its potential to attract research concerns that brought together linguistics, anthropology, sociology and psychology. Hymes also admitted that: "an important attraction in the early years of sociolinguistics was that a number of individuals, interested in [language] use, were marginal to their official affiliations" (1997:125).

Hymes' merit lies in having "outlined the broad goals of sociolinguistic research", while Gumperz concentrated 'on concrete evidence of sociolinguistic methodology in action" (Sarangi 2011:377). At the same time, Gumperz looked at the connection between "small-scale interactions" and the "large scale sociological effects" (Jacquement 2011:475) which resulted in a "dynamic view of social environments where history, economic forces and interactive processes […] combine to create or to eliminate social distinctions" (Gumperz 1982:29).

Gumperz and Hymes' seminal concerns were continued in the decades to follow, and several of the thoughts articulated in the 1972 volume, apart from receiving great attention from the research community, gave rise to separate sub-disciplines: for example, to conversation analysis (Sacks and Schegloff), variationist sociolinguistics (Labov) and the sociology of language (Fishman) (cf Rampton 2017; Duranti 2009; Bucholtz & Hall 2008). Gumperz continued editing *Language in Society* until 1994. He pursued his commitment to interactional sociolinguistics launching a book series, *Studies in Interactional Sociolinguistics,* in 1982, which he co-edited with Paul Drew, Marjorie Goodwin & Deborah Schiffrin. The series was mainly concerned with research on the social dynamics of talk in everyday and institutional settings, including clinics, schools, work-places, courtrooms, news interviews and focus groups. The group of scholars brought together by Gumperz in his series, wrote papers on discourse analysis, pragmatics, interactional linguistics, conversation analysis, linguistic anthropology. This broad array of approaches made the volume a "rather a relatively loose grouping of mutually intelligible perspectives, rather than a tight alignment" (Rampton 2017:2). Gumperz himself pursued his quest for "a general theory of verbal communication which integrates what we know about grammar, culture and interactive conventions into a single overall framework of concepts and analytic procedures" (1982:7, quoted in Rampton 2).

Gumperz's social approach

Gumperz and Hymes' *general theory of verbal communication* regards the speech event as a unit of analysis which could prove that culture did not stand outside talk but that it was ingrained in situated speaking activities (Auer & Roberts 2011; Gumperz 2008). Their theory relies on several contributions that come from: linguistics and discourse analysis (which provide a perspective on the communicative choices made by the interactants from the available linguistic resources in situated communication); Goffmanian and conversation analysis, which throws light on the construction of "local architectures of intersubjectivity" (Heritage 1997), on the rituals and other aspects influencing the use of semiotic forms and strategies; ethnography, which accounts for the stability, the status of linguistic forms, rhetorical strategies and semiotic materials acquired in different social networks, and explains how such encounters fit into broader biographies, institutions and histories. To these elements, Gumpers adds the notions of "inferencing" and "contextualisation".

In regard to semiotics, an area explored minutely by some anthropologists, Gumperz contends to insist on the theorisation of "contextualization" and "inferencing". *Inferencing* stands for the interpretive work that individuals go through while trying to reconcile their prior experience of knowledge with the elements of the speech encounter-at-hand. In other words, inferencing is the effortless process of making sense of what is uttered or what is provided in an encounter. While inferencing is regarded as a receptive sense-making, *contextualisation* shifts the focus on the speech production process. It is an on-going process which contributes to the speakers' reassurance that they are understanding the each other. This is a tacit process intertwined with a permanent monitoring of all elements that concur during the encounter. These processes have a major impact on understanding the "context", and at the same time reveal that words, their denotation, the formal structures of grammar and the propositional meaning of sentences do count, but that they become only one element within the broader array of semiotic resources available for the production and interpretation of meaning (cf Hanks 1996; Verschueren 1999). Since language is indexical, permanently pointing to persons, practices, settings, objects and ideas that are never explicitly expressed (Erickson 2011), context is regarded as "dynamic, interactively accomplished, and intrinsic to communication" (Rampton 2017:3). Thus context turns into an understanding of the social world that is interactionally ratified and undermined from one moment to the next as the participants in an encounter respond to one another. At the same time, any interaction reveals social differences which reflect different social norms and expectations and which stand for the discourses that the interactants have experienced in their prior interactions or involvements with socio-communicative networks. These instantiated discourses range from intimate relationships to complex, formal encounters and national education systems and global media. Thus, without doubt, the notions of inferencing and contextualization offer us a way of seeing how prior experience and prominent ideologies contribute to the here-and-now speech production activity, taking into account social expectation, and the participants (Blommaert & Rampton 2011).

From the sociological point of view, Gumperz suggested that "the relationship of […] social factors to speech form is quite different from what the sociologist means by correlation among variables' and proposed 'an important break with previous approaches to social structure and to language and society" (Gumperz & Hernandez-Chavez 1972:98). Other scholars admit that "Behavioural regularities are no longer regarded as reflections of independently measurable norms' and that 'these norms are themselves seen as communicative behavior" (Blom & Gumperz 1972:432). From this approach it results that Gumperz' theory of communication is related to constructionist theories of social practice, resonating with Giddens' concept of "practice" as the "production and reproduction of society […] as a skilled [but by no means wholly conscious] performance on the part of the members" (1976:160). Amid the rise of social studies, Gumperz places sociolinguistics as an interdisciplinary resource for engaging "with the facts of modern life" and "yield [ing distinctive] insights into the workings of social process" (1982:4,7 quoted in Rampton 2017:4).

Gumperz approached social interactions micro-analytically and for this reason he was asked in an interview by John Twitchin in 1979 why he was interested in micro-analyses and not in macro-level analyses which regarded the social processes that took place in a multi-racial society where racial discrimination and economic disadvantages dominated the British political, economic and cultural scene. To this comment Gumperz answered that "There is no denying that politics and economic conditions are extremely important in race relations, and that ultimately redressing the balance of discrimination is a matter of power. But communication *is* power" (Rampton 4). Gumperz managed to unfold and analyse strips of audio and video recordings of situated interaction, thereby contributing to discovering a fundamental procedure of investigating social interactions. In doing so, Gumperz addressed the political issues of race, discrimination, class stratification and gender relations in his micro-analyses of recorded interactions.

Gumperz's interdisciplinary theory and IS micro-analyses are related to Foucault's notion of "eventualisation" (Rampton 2017) that rested on the analysis of an event "according to the multiple processes that constitute it", "proceed[ing] by progressive, necessarily incomplete saturation", and "show[ing] that things weren't as necessary as all that […] in what subsequently counts as being self-evident" (1980/1994:249-50, quoted in Rampton 4). According to Rampton, Gumperz' contribution lies in helping "push the processes associated with ethnicity, gender, generation, class, etc. *into perspective,* documenting their intricacy, distribution and significance in ordinary lives beyond the headline representations in politics and the media" (4).

On the other hand, Gumperz criticises "the institutions operating in ethnically diverse environments for relying too heavily on the aspects of meaning that seem to be stabilized in lexico-grammar" because "these institutions overlook the crucial contribution of less standardised sources" (cited by Rampton 5).

Interactional sociolinguistics and its relation to other (sub) branches

Interactional sociolinguistics has used methods and theories eclectically. One method it shares with conversation analysis (CA) is the interest in the minute analysis of recordings of natural interactions. However, interactional sociolinguistics differs from CA in that it focuses on inferential processes and the interpretation of cultural and social contexts. In addition, while IS studies the relationship between linguistic sign and social knowledge in discourse, the purpose of CA is to identify "the structures that underlie social interaction" (Stivers & Sidnell 2013: 2).

With anthropology it shares the commitment to the analysis of cultural variation and the meanings that participants in interactions give to their own identities, to those of others and to actions. From philosophy of language and linguistics it takes the notions of 'implicature' and 'speech acts', but, at the same time, it is concerned with real people in real interactions.

Relative to communication studies, interactional sociolinguistics shares the interest in the "actors' apparent strategies and intended meanings in talk, and it overlaps with strands in many of these disciplines that attend to communicative frames and meta-discursivity in talk and interaction" (Bailey 2008: 2317). At the same time, several communication researchers criticised the sociolinguistic accounts of intercultural miscommunication, arguing that miscommunication stands for political and social inequality rather than for "divergent patterns for linking surface communicative forms and meanings" (2317). Furthermore, such critics held that many studies of intercultural miscommunication have not recognised the role played by social and political inequality and reasoned that this might be a limitation of interactional sociolinguistics. They also argued that interactional sociolinguistics can become a method for analysing and interpreting how social knowledge and linguistic knowledge intersect in creating meaning in talk (Bailey 2008). Critics pointed out that it can also explain how inequality and conflicting interests are negotiated in talk. Finally, a great merit of interactional sociolinguistics is that it can examine and explain "the process of meaning-making at the intersection of talk and culture" by means of conversational inferencing and contextualisation cues (2317).

The interdisciplinary 'openness' of the 21st century interactional sociolinguistics

While praising Gumperz's contribution to interactional sociolinguistics, we cannot help wondering what is the future of IS and if, indeed, it might survive as a stand-alone sub-branch in the 21st century.

On the one hand, interactional sociolinguistics was articulated by Gumperz and Hymes from many subdisciplines and appeared as a coherent research direction at the time it was articulated. On the other, interactional sociolinguistics inspired a number of scholars who, in turn, pursued divergent threads of linguistic, social and cultural investigation. Amid these diverging research commitments, the question that arises is whether interactional sociolinguistics, as an outcome of many subsidiary traditions, might converge and retain the identity envisioned by Gumperz (2017), or whether it is deemed to be engulfed by the traditions it contributed to.

In order to find a valid answer to this quest, we shall look first at the challenges or rather threats of the 21st century. First, diversification may arise from the term "sociolinguistics" itself, which has been used in connection with the quantitative variationist tradition in the US, a tradition, which, somehow continues the correlational perspective that Gumperz repudiated in his lifetime. At the same time, Duranti (2009:2) and Bucholtz & Hall (2008:402) have adopted the term "sociocultural linguistics" to refer to the orientation of British and European linguists who use the term for "linguistic ethnography" (Rampton 2017). Rampton tries to find out what caused this diversification of approaches and looks at the articles published in the "Studies in Interactional Sociolinguistics" series. He assumes that the series contains too broad a range of approaches and that the term interactional linguistics functions rather as an "umbrella" term that accounts for the qualities and processes underlying communication than a "substantive theory" (5). To do justice to Gumperz, Rampton asserts that Gumperz "developed a deeper theoretical synthesis capable of accommodating many of the advances made in different (sub-)disciplinary traditions", while also wondering how they "could be brought back together". It is also our endeavour to try to figure out how these advances can be "brought back together" in an incredibly complex global world governed by major social shifts, cultural differences and paradigmatic changes. Could and would IS survive as a distinctive approach, or would it be rather absorbed by linguistic anthropology, itself a broad tradition which anticipates Silverstein's formulation of the "total linguistic fact" (1985)? Indeed, according to Silverstein, "the datum for a science of language, is irreducibly dialectic in nature […] an unstable mutual interaction of meaningful sign forms, contextualised to situations of interested human use and mediated by the fact of cultural ideology" (1985: 220).

Another reason for the branching out of interactional sociolinguistics is the difficulty with which such an intricate discipline can be taught. In comparison with conversation analysis and variationist sociolinguistics, which can be easily taught as they have clearly defined theories and procedures, it falls short of having some clear, applicable theories (Rampton 2008). Consequently, those who try to teach interactional sociolinguistics must either come from a solid linguistic experience and explain how micro-analyses can account for broader issues in various social settings or belong to other research areas and be drawn to IS by the desire to find more relevant answers to their particular disciplinary concerns. Both IS and CA can be used successfully to explore the underlying interpretations and perspectives, but while CA illuminates "the sequential machinery of interaction", IS can help interpret broader scale institutional and social processes, reflecting, for example, on the data's implications for the next steps in ethnographic fieldwork (220). IS turns out to be helpful in that its explorations allow insights into local language ideologies and the participants' concerns and interpretations of the background and specificity of particular episodes.

More importantly, IS is characterised by a general lack of "boundary policing", by its "interdisciplinary openness and its relationship with adjacent fields" (Rampton 7). This assumption is pursued by Rampton in an attempt to explain the further evolution of the concept. Rampton (2008) follows two investigative threads that were central to Gumpers'z work: *code-switching* and *intercultural communication* in institutional settings. With respect to code switching, he notes that while in his 1970s works Gumperz focused on the switches between languages that were well-established in the peoples' repertoires, the researchers of the 1990s shifted the research focus on *language crossing* and *stylisation*. Language crossing has come to represent the use of other ethnic varieties in settings where ethnic boundaries are very strict, while stylisation refers to the use of styles that are outside one's normal repertoire but which has no consequences regarding the legitimacy of its use for participants or users (Hewitt 1986; Rampton 1995; Bucholtz 1999; Cutler 1999; Jaspers 2005). This research trend reflects the individual and collective social shifts, the restatement or refutation of social identity in volatile circumstances, and is itself an expression of reaching out towards a global approach, towards a *sociolinguistics of globalisation*. Furthermore, Gumperz's own statement that "individuals are freer to alter their social personae with the circumstances" (1982:26) and his belief that speech communities could not be entirely isolated as speech enclaves anticipate the shift from state-determined multiculturalism of communities to the global superdiversity that characterises many countries today (Arnaut et al. 2016). This shift in the research tradition of interactional sociolinguistics is paralleled by recent concerns for cross-ethnic bureaucratic encounters (Charalambous 2012; Charalambous, et. al. 2016).

Similarly, Gumperz's work on intercultural communication, which focused on the intercourse between bureaucratic and social staff and migrant workers or people seeking better work places, has been continued by researchers who examine the massive number of encounters between state officials and the migrants, represented by refugees and asylum seekers over the last two decades (Blommaert 2001, 2009). This research trend was, in turn, taken further in the direction of investigations of oral encounters (such as interviews).

Gumperz' work on code-switching and his insights into intercultural communication in institutional settings are research threads that resonate with the research commitments of current researchers. Thus, Gumperz's research has slowly flown into a new sociolinguistics, a *sociolinguistics of globalization* (Blommaert 2010; Jacquemet 2005).

Finally, interactional sociolinguistics has made the interdisciplinary relevance over the last 10-20 years more relevant by a more explicit interest of researchers in linking the analyses of specific interactions to the work of Bakhtin, Bourdieu and Foucault (e.g. Blommaert 2005; Coupland et al (ed) 2001; Jacquemet 2005; Perez-Milans 2013; Rampton 2006, 2016). For these scholars the achievements of interactional sociolinguistics remain an interdisciplinary reference point for future investigations (Rampton 2017).

The survival of interactional sociolinguistics in the 21st century

In 1967, Jacque Derrida, relying on his readings from Nietzsche and Heidegger, published the book *On Grammatology,* in which he attacked the metaphysical presuppositions of the humanist tradition by launching the concept of "deconstructionism", which critiqued structuralism and ultimately led to post-structuralism. His radical ideas against metaphysical presuppositions on social sciences led to new approaches in hermeneutics, in philosophy and literary criticism. Similar shifts, changes or turns in approaches have become a general and common practice in practically all fields of human inquiry.

In regard to interactional sociolinguistics, its sustainability or survival in time is as fragile as that of any other linguistic paradigm, of any approach or research area. First, its paradigmatic uncertainty and volatile disciplinary boundaries are risk factors that easily expose it either to its incorporation by other more prominent disciplines or to a gradual epistemological extinction. Its being a rather comprehensive framework for engaging with the empirical specifics required for any social science aligning with practice theory (Ortner 2006) and its general quest to provide linguistic accounts for social problems confers to it the general quality of an instrument for the disciplines focusing on language and linguistic ethnography.

The first reason that might account for the blurred lines of separation between interactional sociolinguistics and other sub-branches or disciplines is that interactional sociolinguistics can be used as a framework to the analysis of any interaction and because much of the empirical research carried out in the field of discourse analysis, in communication, linguistic anthropology, sociology or sociology-oriented linguistics, is indebted to this approach.

The uncertain future of interactional sociolinguistics lies also in the fact that each sub-branch of linguistics evolves fast, whereas interactional sociolinguistics has yielded some sustainable approaches which have been valorised by other sub-branches, but which have not consolidated the status of interactional sociolinguistics. Instead they have contributed to the advancement of other traditions.

In spite of the remarkable and acknowledged contribution interactional sociolinguistics has had into sociolinguistics, it has not provided clearly defined theories and procedures (Rampton 2008) which could set it apart from other related approaches, and which could confer to it a major epistemological role in scientific research. In addition, it has had a limited applicability to other research areas.

Any major paradigmatic shift is, in general, attributed to a renowned promoter and is supported by the research community. Its research value, if validated and scientifically legitimised, is continued in a sustained manner by other remarkable representatives of the tradition. In the case of interactional sociolinguistics, Gumperz and Hymes' outstanding work was not continued consistently by prominent sociolinguists. Instead, only some research assumptions of their original tradition were carried further and led to other, more consistent traditions.

The survival of any tradition depends on its acceptability, on its validation by the broader research community, on its legitimate status and capacity to resist research challenges. Furthermore, any standing and lasting approach or paradigm must bring research benefits to the community in which it is used in terms of sustainable results and contributions, whereas interactional sociolinguistics failed to continue to fuel its old tradition.

On the other hand, many scholars (e.g. Blommaert 2005; Coupland et al (ed) 2001; Jacquemet 2005; Perez-Milans 2013; Rampton 2006, 2016) contribute new insights to the relationship between interactional episodes and the work of social science scholars. Given the strong move of scientific research towards interdisciplinarity and social sciences, in particular, a continuation of the topics investigated by interactional sociolinguistics can be easily foreseen. Furthermore, social issues play an increased role in the world and scholars must come to terms with the contemporary social changes and, eventually, investigate them. The contemporary world is dominated by revolutionary technological changes that affect all scholarly disciplines and all investigative concerns. Sociologists have warned the world of the unprecedented technological advancement. These changes must be duly monitored and investigated in order to be known, controlled, anticipated and dealt with. Computers, television, tablets, online platforms and the new "online sociality" (van Dijck 2013) have created a new configuration of the world human society based on a neoliberal market, on new forms of social control, on a "dual society" where a "fully networked zone coexists with a marginal sector of non-achievers" (Fraser 2003:169). The new world is a world where asylum seekers, immigrants, ethnic minorities interact with bureaucratic or institutional experts– immigration control officers, police, military, intelligence, private companies, lawyers and researchers in an effort to settle political, social and cultural issues. All these major world processes and phenomena require a careful sociological investigation based on communicative and interactional episodes. In order to capture and interpret these interactions many scholars refer to Foucault's notion of "governmentality" (1978/2003: 229-245) and try to relate small-scale encounters with higher level coordination. Rose (1999:5) opined that to study governmentality one should "track force relations at the molecular level, as they flow through a multitude of human technologies, in all the practices, arenas and spaces where programmes for the administration of others intersect with techniques for the administration of ourselves". Gumperzian analysis can contribute to this new research path. Gumperz's work on code-switching management, cognitive inferencing and shifts in interactional footing and cultural repositioning can provide a useful base for the investigation of everyday use

of digital technologies. In order to expand code-switching framework interpretations to the interpretation of different media, these frameworks must be expanded beyond register and language use.

Besides investigating the participants' *here-and-now* performance, Gumperz noticed the unperceived communicative sensibilities operating in the background, an issue taken up by van Dijck in an attempt to "make the hidden layer visible" (2013: 122). The concern for the unperceived and hidden communicative information can shed light on the "communicative styles" in on-line Web 2.0 environments, which are ultimately logics of control expertly designed to generate profit (Rampton 2017).

Gumperz' concern for the way institutions construe and assess individuals during intercultural and institutional interactions is manifest in Haggerty & Ericson's work in which the authors refer to the profiles constructed by institutions through surveillance. They admit that "knowledge of the population is now manifest in discrete bits of information which break the individual down into flows for purposes of management, profit and entertainment" (2000:614). At the same time, interaction sociolinguistics might be useful in investigating the experience of surveillance itself (Rampton 2017), since according to Ball, surveillance "has not been addressed in any detail" (2009: 640). Thus, in a world in which everything is surveyed and inventorised, interactional sociolinguistics may open new research perspectives into these processes that involve human and technological interaction.

Furthermore, if scholars and researchers will commit themselves more to the study of socio-communicative practices and forms of control that involve both individuals and technology they will have to collaborate more with digital communication experts. Nevertheless, apart from the two elements, there is yet another element that comes into sight, the institutions and the way they use the technological information to reach their ends. Finally, technology has changed the face of the world and has affected its population with the result that researchers should try to find out more about how technologies affect the "institutional regimes and participant practices in offices, clinics and schools" (Rampton 2017:11). This quest in which a major point of reference is Foucault's notion of 'governmentality' may help scientists make sense of the world developments and provide interactional sociolinguistics with the opportunity to carry out its interdisciplinary work.

Conclusions

The present article put forward a plethora of arguments that account for both the survival of interactional sociolinguistics and its gradual dissipation into other, dominant and more principled branches.

However, Hymes and Gumperz's work represents their early efforts to develop a general theory of language, society and culture, a branch of linguistics (and/or sociolinguistics) built around the notions of "inference" and "contextualisation". Their work reached out to other researchers and enriched their contribution to sociolinguistics. Still, in spite of the merits interactional sociolinguistics has earned, it can be subject to further changes and give in to other more rigorous "turns".

On the other hand, its possible links with Foucault's, Gidden's and other prominent sociologists' works might revive the old tradition. Moreover, the basis it can lay down for other society investigations (surveillance control, the individuals' assessment, web 2.0 environments, investigation of the rapport individuals- technology, etc.) can assure its survival. Finally, its capacity to draw in other socially relevant investigations and adapt to the requirements of the new 'governmentality' of the 21st century might guarantee its survival.

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