The role of discourse marker "oh" in interpreting constructed dialogue as identity work
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This research focuses on the discourse marker *oh* when used at the beginning of instances of quoted speech, or "constructed dialogue" (Tannen 1989). I examine use of *oh*-prefaced constructed dialogue across seven ethnographic interviews collected as part of a larger study of a community of improv performers in Washington, DC. I contextualize qualitative insights about structural and interactional functions of "oh" against quantitative tabulation of seven speakers' use of this discourse marker to preface constructed dialogue, considering implications for speaker style (Eckert and Rickford 2001, Schilling-Estes 2002). This research affords new insight into the range of stylistic resources available to speakers and contributes insight to the ongoing study of style by capturing systematic patterning of discourse-level features.

Although discourse markers (Heritage 1998, 2002; Schiffrin 1987) and constructed dialogue (Johnstone 1987; Hamilton 1998; Tannen 1986, 1989) have been recognized as important resources in the linguistic construction of identity, and although *oh* has been noted to often occur at the beginning of constructed dialogue, research on discourse markers has largely tended to ignore this discourse slot (Maeschler 2002: 5).

Structurally, *oh* cues the listener to a shift in footing (Goffman 1974), as in Example 1 below where *oh* accompanies the shift from Myfanwy animating her own voice to that of a figure in a story world:

> **Example 1**
> Myfanwy: and somebody told me "**oh** I hear this Washington Improv Theater has classes"

Interactionally, while many instances of *oh*-prefacing illustrate the more canonical function of *oh* indicating a change in information state (Schiffrin 1987), some instances of *oh* seem to convey information about the speaker's affective attitude or stance towards the quoted material (Bucholtz forthcoming; Bakhtin 1981). In such examples, *oh* cues the listener that the speaker is animating a figure with whom they disagree as principal, as in example 2 below, where Myfanwy answers my question about improv culture in DC by contrasting it with what she views as the overly competitive improv culture in Chicago.:

> **Example 2**
> Myfanwy: in Chicago, like people are just like "**Oh** our theater is better than your theater"
>   "**Oh** I think the way you train people is stupid"

This use of *oh* as a strategy for marking distance between the speaker's voice and the quoted material builds out of an evaluative function of "oh" identified by Schiffrin (1987), which has not been explored in discourse analytic or variationist literature on quotation. This work adds to an understanding of the functions of discourse markers, and contributes to a view of constructed dialogue as an identity resource by which speakers stage interactions that reflect aspects of their identities that they wish to make salient.

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