

Functions of “break[ing] into song” in interactions between three sisters

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Introduction: why look at this?

- So far, breaking into song in discourse has been neglected in CA and interactional sociolinguistics
- Breaking into song constitutes a particular speech activity (Gumperz 1995)
- Analysis of this can contribute to our understanding of how group dynamics and affect get displayed and managed in discourse

Background: affect in discourse

- Svennevig (1999): familiarity (how much you know about someone), affect (how much you like that person), solidarity (mutual rights and obligations)
→ Breaking into song and song reference index *familiarity*
- Selting (2017): shared affect displays
 - “The term ‘affectivity’ is used here to refer to displayed emotive involvement and its management in interaction”→ Breaking into song displays and also encourages shared affect
- Stivers (2008): alignment with the activity; affiliation with teller’s stance
→ song can be used to encourage affiliation
- Goffman (1981): keys & rekeying
→ Breaking into song rekeys surrounding discourse

Background: music

- Why do people sing?
 - facilitates appropriate social participation (Kirschner & Tomasello 2010; Lewis 2013)
 - Has a role in regulating emotion (Trehub 2001)
 - joint singing leads to *shared affect* (Selting 2017) and *affiliation* (Stivers 2008)
- Why do people listen to music?
 - “Listening to recorded music has always been a social activity: listening with peers or sharing musical evaluations with friends helps individuals to shape their taste while concurrently constructing a group identity” (van Dijck 2006)
 - Confidence in a shared repertoire allows participants to reference songs

Data & methods

- British Nigerian family in London
- Three sisters: Blossom (aged 23 at time of recording), Eri (aged 18), Jodi (aged 17)
 - Blossom operates the Zoom H2 recorder
- 2 recordings:
 - While watching *The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian* (2008), 56 minutes = Recording 1
 - While making dinner, 45 minutes = Recording 2
- Conversation Analysis & interactional sociolinguistic approach

Example 1 (from Recording 2)

- 1 Blossom Gosh, I thought she was in an accident and she, g- got her teeth
2 knocked out or something, [Jod-↓i]
3 Jodi [No I jus wanted] to add like the risk factor
4 Jodi but it wasn't any[thing]
5 Blossom [Oh you just wanted to] add some [suspense]
6 Jodi [She couldn't feel] half her face
though.
7 (0.04)
8 Blossom Aw[w-a
9 Eri ***[I] [can't feel my face when I'm with you::]**
10 Blossom *[can't feel my face when I'm with you::]
11 Jodi *[when I'm with you::]
12 (0.59)
13 Blossom at the dentist=
14 Jodi =at the [dentist]
15 Eri [oh mah goodNESS]
16 Blossom [at the] dentist
17 Jodi at the dentist
18 Eri at the DEN-TIST



Example 1: singing is triggered intertextually

- Song is triggered intertextually – *not* “spontaneous” (cf. Custodero 2006, Young 2004)

17 Blossom [Oh you just wanted to] add some [suspense]

18 Jodi [She **couldn't feel**] half **her face** though.

19 Blossom Aw[w-a

20 Eri **[I can't feel my face when I'm with you:]**

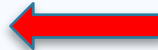
21 Blossom can't feel my face when I'm with you:

22 Jodi [when I'm with you:]

Example 1: singing & shared affect

29 Jodi [he he HU hu HE HE hu]
30 Blossom [hh he hu hh hh hh]
31 Eri [A-HU-hu HA hu] hu
32 Blossom oh gosh
33 Blossom um,
34 Eri *I can't feel my [↑fa::ce
35 Jodi [you should make it like some of like d-]
36 Blossom [when I'm with you]
37 Eri [when I'm with you]
(0.05)
38 Blossom at the dentist
39 Eri at the dentist
40 Blossom at the dentist
41 Eri at the dentist
42 Jodi [we should make it some] <kind of thing>
43 Blossom [a-HA]

(0.17)
(1.23)



- Song terminates in laughter
→ interaction gets rekeyed
(Goffman 1981)
- Song gets started up again by Eri
→ evidence of “savouring” the
“shared affect” (Selting 2017)

Example 1: “break[ing] into song”

33 Blossom =at the dentist=
34 Eri =at the den[tist]
35 Jodi [we should make it some] <kind of thing>
36 Blossom [a-HA]
37 (0.14)
38 Jodi <where we try not to **break into song** for [a week]>
39 Eri [Jodi] that is **that's just not us**,
[we can't -]
[...]
50 Jodi [or like stop] a whole week of **song references**.
51 Eri No Jodi, [that's too hard]=
52 Blossom [No:-↓o]
53 Jodi =Okay, a whole DAY of song refe[rences]
54 Blossom [Our CHAT would be so
BORing without song refer(h)ences]
55 Eri [(No Jod-i:-uh)]

Example 2 (from Recording 2)

09 Blossom Really
(0.10)

10 Eri Times like these, man
(0.69)

11 Blossom *in the times like the[(h)se

12 Jodi [How did I kno(h)w]

13 Blossom t-hh] ha ha ha ha

14 Blossom (h)Because you were thinkin it too



Example 2: song indexes familiarity

- Song reference/breaking into song allows all three sisters stake a claim to knowledge of each other
 - Eri sings a song that the others will know
 - Jodi disaligns with the activity, but acknowledges this shared knowledge
 - This is highlighted in Blossom's response
- Breaking into song indexes familiarity (Svennevig 1999)
 - Leads to positive affect, associated with group belonging

Example 3 (from Recording 2)

- 01 Blossom Shove this in now. (0.52)
02 Blossom Jodi, you've been doin this veg for so long? (0.19)
03 Eri No she hasn't (1.13)
04 Jodi Thas right, back me Eri! (0.18)
05 Blossom Fam.
06 Eri =I'm backing [you]
07 Blossom [It's been li]ke twenny-four minutes?
08 Jodi Oh (0.42)
09 Blossom Wha\ you been doin (0.06)
10 Eri She hasn't been doing it [(for very long)]
11 Jodi [I didn't] start (.) from, the beginning:=
12 Eri **=_*started from the bottom now we're [here]***
13 Jodi [OH] MY goo[dness]=
14 Blossom [Not e][ven though]
15 Eri =*st(h)arted from the b(h)ottom of [the-]
16 Jodi [O]kay. we'll try and stop for the rest of this evening and
17 Eri [Why:?]



Example 3: song as an interactional move

- There is a moment of coordination trouble (Ochs & Kremer-Sadlik 2015) – an issue of solidarity (Svennevig 2000)

02 Blossom Jodi, you've been
doin this veg for so long?
(0.19)

03 Eri No she hasn't
(1.13)

04 Jodi Thas right, back me Eri!
(0.18)

- Song is a move to rekey the interaction as humorous - which is unsuccessful

12 Eri **=_*started from the
bottom now we're [here]***

13 Jodi [OH] MY goo[dness]=

14 Blossom [Not e][ven though]

15 Eri =*st(h)arted from the
b(h)ottom of [the-]

Example 3: song as an interactional move

- Oriented to as song reference by Blossom – evaluated in terms of relevance
- Oriented to as activity-type by Jodi, with resulting disalignment (Stivers 2008)

12 Eri = **_*started from the bottom now we're [here]***

13 Jodi [OH] MY goo[dness]=

14 Blossom [Not e][ven though]

Example 4 (from Recording 1)

- 01 Blossom Nice earring (1.59)
- 02 Blossom Speaking of earring I'm thinking of getting that fourth piercing:
- 03 Blossom tomorrow (3.72)
- [...]
- 30 Eri I'd rather you didn't I feel like he doesn't like (having) piercings at all.
(5.38)
- [...]
- 35 Blossom leike, (0.69)
- 36 Blossom I dunno:¿ just this random third piercing (0.86)
- 37 Blossom this and like no rhyme or [↑reason]
- 38 Eri ((cough))kh-hh (0.75)
- 39 Jodi ***rhy:me and ↑REAson reign once mo:::re*=**
- 40 Blossom =I love that film (0.23)
- 41 Eri What film is at? =



Example 4: song as a move to restore affiliation

- There is a moment of interactional trouble – Eri is not affiliating with Blossom's intention to get a fourth piercing
- Blossom pursues affiliation unsuccessfully
- Jodi sings one line of a song from the film *The Phantom Tollbooth*
- Blossom orients to this as song *reference*, which enables a topic shift
- All three sisters orient to their collective cultural repertoire, and Eri suggests watching the film
- = affiliation is achieved

Conclusions

- “Breaking into song” is not spontaneous: it gets triggered intertextually, like other kinds of quotation (e.g. Sierra 2016, Tannen 2007)
- Can be oriented to as “song reference” or as “break[ing] into song”, as Jodi says – these overlap somewhat
- Indexes a shared repertoire of cultural knowledge (van Dijck 2006) and therefore *familiarity* (Svennevig 1999)
- Participation in joint singing leads to *rekeying* (Goffman 1981) and *shared affect* (Selting 2017)
- This allows song to be a resource at moments of interactional trouble – restores *affiliation* (Stivers 2008)

Future directions

- Multimodal analysis
 - Role of gaze in initiating joint singing
- Compare breaking into song among adults with breaking into song among children

Selected references

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Thank you for listening!

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Symbol	Meaning	Symbol	Meaning
↑	Rise in intonation on that particular syllable	.	A final intonational contour.
↓	Step down in intonation on that particular syllable	?	A high rising terminal or question intonation
^	At the start of an utterance. This means that there is a rise in voice register on this turn.	¿	A less extreme rise than that marked by a “?”
—	This utterance starts on a lower than usual voice register; the opposite of ‘^’	,	A rise still less extreme than that represented by “¿”. This can indicate “continuing” intonation
*	An asterisk is placed at the beginning of a line to indicate that this line is sung.	:	A colon indicates that a sound is drawn out
=	One speaker’s speech followed on immediately from the previous speaker’s turn.	WOrd	High emphasis and/or volume on this syllable
[word]	Overlapped speech	°word°	Quiet speech
<word>	slow speech	hh	Aspiration. The more <i>h</i> ’s, the more aspiration (Sidnell, 2010)
>>word<	fast speech	wo(h)rd	Represents laughter audible in a word
<		wor-	The word was cut-off, either by self or because of interruption from another.
((sound))	Noises such as coughs, dropping kitchen pans etc.	rr	More than one ‘r’ in a row represents a trilled /r/
(word)	This indicates uncertainty as to the transcription or as to the speaker identity.	\	glottal stop
()	Something is being said, but it is impossible to hear what.	!	spoken as an exclamation – greater intensity, emphasis, or speed
(. . .)			
(0.5)	Silence duration (Sidnell, 2010)		
(.)	This represents a “micropause” (Sidnell, 2010)		